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A PROPOSAL

FOR THE

LIQUIDATION

OF THE

NATIONAL DEBT;

THE

ABOLITION OF TYTHES;

AND THE

Reform of the Church Revenue.

THIRD EDITION.

QUEM DEUS VULT PERDERE
PRIUS DEMENTAT.

By Sir Francis Bolake

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TO THE

READER.

THERE are more good conſequences which ariſe from diſcreet proceedings, than any man is aware of when he gives them birth. This is an obſervation which the author has found verified; for in addition to thoſe advantages which he expected to derive from the circumſtance of concealing his name, another very material one has ſprung up. It has enabled him to mix indiſcriminately in all companies, and collect the ſentiments of perſons who might otherwiſe have been ſilent at ſuch an interview; or who would not, at any rate, have delivered an opinion with that frankneſs and warmth, which carries along with it this conviction at leaſt —that it flows from the heart.

In theſe converſations three principal objections had been ſtarted, the weight of which, like an impenetrable barrier, obſtructing the progreſs of this deſign, drew down upon its head, the imputation of being a reverie not reducible to practice. In order, therefore, to reſcue it from that oblivion to which it would otherwiſe moſt deſervedly have been conſigned, the author was induced, in the ſecond edition, to attempt an anſwer to the ſeveral objections. Similar reaſons have prompted him to undertake the removal of other obſtructions which have been thrown in its way ſince the late publication, and are now to be found, in the ſhape of queries, immediately following the former objections.

Many other very material additions have been made to this impreſſion. The doctrine of preſcription has been conſidered and explained; and the whole enriched with an appendix, containing a narrative of proceedings merely reſpecting the preſent propoſal.

PART

PART I.

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE NATIONAL DEBT.

LET us ſuppoſe the debt of the nation—*two hundred and forty millions.* The intereſt upon this debt—*ten millions.* The rent-roll of real eſtates—*fifty millions.*

My enquiries, relative to theſe points, encourage me to ſay that our ſituation is not altogether ſo bad as it is here repreſented. However, as a greater degree of accuracy is not material to my preſent purpoſe, let us take it for

for granted that the *rents*, *debt*, *and intereſt*, are ſuch as I have ſtated them to be.

From theſe premiſes, it appears, that the income of the individuals of this country is *ſixty millions a year:* and it further appears, that if the debt of the nation was transferred to individuals, every proprietor of real eſtates and ſtock would be encumbered thereby to the amount of four years income.

A proprietor of 100l. per annum would be burdened with four hundred pounds, another of 500l. per annum with two thouſand pounds, and ſo on in proportion; which, at four per cent. would reduce the firſt to 84l. and the latter to 420l. per annum.

This is no ſuch mighty ſacrifice, if it was even in addition to the preſent burdens. But when it is conſidered that this payment is *in lieu of all taxes whatever*, I much queſtion whether there is a man in the kingdom, who will not think himſelf a gainer by the bargain; taking along with the propoſition, the comforts that attend it.

For my own part, were it in my option, I would not heſitate a moment in the choice

I would

I would make; *and my proportion would be no inconſiderable ſum.*

The national debt is here ſtated at two hundred and forty millions, and it is propoſed that intereſt ſhall be made payable thereon, at the rate of four per cent. which will raiſe nine millions, ſix hundred thouſand pounds. But as no intereſt muſt be calculated upon the ſum which the ſtockholder contributes, the actual receipt to be paid by the proprietors of real eſtates will be eight millions.

No objection ſurely can be made to this arrangement, which, although it takes up the room of all other national demands, brings an incumbrance upon the proprietors of real eſtates of very little more than *three ſhillings in the pound.*

Beſides, if it ſhould hereafter appear that the debt has been over-rated; * or that the

* From what has ſince appeared, the public debt is ſomewhat undervalued at two hundred and forty millions. There does not, however, remain a doubt but the proportion of ſix to one between the debt and the means will ſtill hold good.

bulk

bulk of real eſtates has been undervalued; which in both inſtances is moſt likely to be the caſe, the burden will be ſtill lighter than that which is here placed upon the back of the public.

Notwithſtanding what has been advanced in a former paragraph, reſpecting the payment of eight millions only, this regulation will effect a reduction of taxes and duties to the full amount of nine millions, ſix hundred thouſand pounds. The total outgoings do not exceed *twelve millions and a half*; and as the cuſtoms produce three millions, we may ſafely ſay that the whole is provided for by the preſent propoſition.

This is the light in which I have been accuſtomed to conſider the ſtate of the nation; but it is more than probable that I have viewed it through a falſe medium: for I find it has been lately declared in a public aſſembly, by a very able and well informed member of that honourable houſe, * that as matters now ſtand, the annual expence will fall very little

* Mr. Thomas Pitt, now Lord Camelford.

ſhort

ſhort of *fourteen millions*, compounded of the following parts:

	£.
Civil Liſt	900,000
Peace Eſtabliſhment	3,500,000
Intereſt	9,393,137
	13,793,137*

Let us now take up the buſineſs upon this ground. Even in this caſe, which no doubt is the worſt that can be put, the deficiency not brought to account by the preſent plan is no more than 4,193,137l. of which the cuſtoms, as mentioned above, producing three millions, there remains ſomething more than one million to be provided for by duties the leaſt burdenſome to the people.

Suppoſe the duty on ſalt is continued, it is very productive, and is in no degree oppreſ-

* This is the neat ſum to be paid into the hands of government, but it is not the preciſe ſum to be taken out of the pockets of individuals; for to this you muſt add ſome millions more, to defray the expence of collecting: Which latter ſum, whatever it is, will be ſaved to individuals; a circumſtance not named before, but well deſerving notice.

ſive; it is indeed hardly to be felt by the meaneſt individual. This duty brings into the treaſury upwards of half a million, and ſtamps no leſs.* If theſe, which are ſufficient for our purpoſe, are approved, all other taxes and duties are done away.

When war returns, taxes indeed muſt return with it. But, as we know where to lay our hands upon nine millions ſix hundred thouſand pounds a-year, we are always provided with a ſum, fully ſufficient, to anſwer all the purpoſes either of attack or defence.

We may therefore, conſider theſe dormant taxes as a reſource, certain and inexhauſtible, in all poſſible caſes; and as ſuch, it will operate to the abſolute annihilation of that monſter of the age, *a national debt*, never more to riſe in judgment againſt us.

And when this circumſtance is made known to the powers of Europe, and other ſtates, it will keep *the world in awe*; for what nation would be hardly enough to give us offence,

* The ſtamps are much more productive ſince the late additional duties have taken place.

when

when it is known, of a certainty, that we can fight with them to the end of time, without incumbering ourſelves in future with a ſhilling of debt.

It is neceſſary to ſay ſomething here in explanation of what was advanced reſpecting the non-payment of intereſt upon the ſtockholders contribution. The income of that body of people is ſtated at ten millions a-year; their contribution, therefore, will amount to forty millions: the intereſt upon which being paid by themſelves to themſelves, an effect is produced ſimilar to that which would take place by reducing their capital: or, in other words, by expunging the national debt to that amount.

For inſtance: A proprietor holding ſtock which produces an income of 100l. per ann. is to contribute four hundred pounds: not, however, by actual payment of the money, but, which is the ſame thing in effect, by relinquiſhing ſo much of his claim upon the public. Therefore, clearly, no calculation of intereſt muſt be made upon this ſum, which, as a debt, has no longer any kind of exiſtence.

Neither is this deduction ſo very bitter a potion, when it is conſidered that the remainder will be well ſecured, which is far from the caſe at preſent, and at good intereſt; and may be transferred, by ſale or otherwiſe, like any other property: for this further advantage will attend the regulation, that it will bring the iniquitous practice of *ſtock-jobbing* to a final period.

The caſe is ſo obvious, it is almoſt unneceſſary to mention, that the proprietors of real eſtates, purchaſing ſtock, at any time, to the amount of the incumbrance, have it in their power to *releaſe their eſtates:* or, they may again diſpoſe of the whole, or a part of it, to provide for younger children; or for any other purpoſe, whenever they pleaſe.

It may be ſaid I have preſſed hard upon real eſtates; in whoſe relief, therefore, and to make the load fall as equal as poſſible upon property in general, it is propoſed, agreeable to the ſpirit of this deſign, that all debts, whether by mortgage, bond, or otherwiſe ſecured, (tradeſmens bills excepted, not carrying intereſt) ſhall contribute in like proportion.

For

For inſtance: It is propoſed that every perſon in poſſeſſion of real eſtates to the amount of 100l. per ann. ſhall contribute four hundred pounds: or, in other words, that his property ſhall be ſubject to the payment of intereſt upon that ſum, at the rate of four per cent. But if the proprietor of ſuch eſtates is encumbered by mortgage, or otherwiſe, he ſhall only contribute in proportion to his clear income; and the reſidue ſhall be made up, in due proportion, by the creditors.

For example: Suppoſe a perſon in poſſeſſion of real eſtates to the amount of 100l. per annum, to be indebted to one or more creditors in the capital ſum of 500l. for which he pays intereſt at the rate of five per cent. In this caſe, as the eſtate is liable to the full payment of 400l. and intereſt thereon as above, the creditors ſhall transfer one hundred pounds of their principal to the public ſtock: that is to ſay, they ſhall transfer it to the proprietor of the eſtate, not by actual payment, but by a reduction of the private debt.

I have ſaid that the propoſed payment is *in lieu of all taxes whatever*, whereas it now appears

pears that the duties on ſalt and ſtamps are intended to be continued.

It is true, I have propoſed to continue thoſe duties; but their preſſure is very light: and even that weight, ſmall as it is, may probably be removed, in part, by ſavings in the reform of the peace eſtabliſhment; and, in part, by the increaſe of the cuſtoms; for no doubt they will encreaſe, by virtue of this reform, and gradually come in aid of the remainder.

If the reader is not already aware of the circumſtance, it is proper to inform him, that what the author has in view is to diſtribute the weight of our burdens upon the individuals of this country, in exact proportion to their ſtrength and ability to bear them. Therefore, when war returns, and with it the taxes, the land-tax, according to the preſent amount of it, is to be levied by an equal rate, affecting not only the landholder, as now, but, in due proportion to their clear receipts, all other perſons who are entitled to payments ſecured upon land, or upon the proprietors of land. In conſequence of this more enlarged and equal diſtribution, the landed intereſt, notwithſtanding

withſtanding the vaſt accumulation of public debt, will not, in time of war, be ſo much loaded as was the original expreſs intention of the legiſlature in caſes of that kind. That is to ſay—the land-tax will not amount, *flagrante bello*, to four ſhillings in the pound.

There is one very material point of conſideration, which has hitherto eſcaped my notice:—the diſtreſs which muſt inevitably fall upon thoſe who have no other means of ſupport for themſelves and families, but what they derive from the emolument of office. And as I fear there are ſome who have been quick-ſighted enough to anticipate this ruin in their minds, from ſuch I ſeek forgiveneſs, for having wounded their feelings, though but for a moment, by leaving room for the ſuſpicion of ſuch injuſtice. Without ſecuring a retreat for theſe

Myſelf ſhould be the firſt
To hate myſelf, and ſtamp my *Plan* accurſt.

Let all ſuch be conſidered as annuitants, and continued in the full receipt of their ſalaries for life; or, if that is thought too much, let them be put upon half-pay. Were it left to

my

my determination, the former ſhould have the preference. But when prudence draws one way, and pity the other, I confeſs myſelf unequal to the conflict. I think I could face death, and any danger, with the firmneſs of a man; but in caſes like theſe, I am woman all over, and nothing but weakneſs.

There is one argument in favour of the more humane ſide of the queſtion, which muſt not be omitted. That even by leaving them in the full poſſeſſion of their ſalaries, you do in effect, reduce them to half-pay; the fees of office being, in moſt caſes, equal to the fixt ſalary; and, in many caſes, I believe, conſiderably more.

And here I might enter upon a large field of benefits, which will reſult to the population, trade, commerce, and manufactures of this country, by the abolition of taxes; but they are not numerable within the compaſs of this paper: neither, indeed, can it be neceſſary to enter upon a detail of them, in proof of a ſelf-evident fact.

One circumſtance, however, I cannot forbear to mention, which is,—that *the Exciſe*

that

that object of juſt terror to Engliſhmen, will no more, like *a ſpectre*, ſtand before us; but the gates of that office, like *the temple of Janus*, will be ſhut, never more to be unlocked, but to provide means, in time of war, for the ſecurity of the ſtate.

* Then, again, ſhall every Engliſhman's houſe be his caſtle; which, however great, however mean, though it were pervious to every wind, and acceſſible to all the elements of nature, *the King cannot, the King dare not enter.*

There is yet another circumſtance, which, as it ſtrikes me forcibly, I beg leave to name.

That the abolition of taxes, will put an effectual *ſtop to emigrations* † from this country, which in the preſent poſture of our affairs, is a certain impending evil, threatening no leſs than the loſs of our liberty, and the ſubjugation of theſe kingdoms to a foreign yoke.

* See Mr. Pitt's ſpeech (late Lord Chatham) in the debate reſpecting the illegality of general warrants.

† More than forty thouſand perſons are ſuppoſed to have emigrated from this country during the laſt peace.

Nay more, that it will in all human probability occaſion ſuch an influx of people of all denominations from other ſtates, and of courſe ſuch an encreaſe of wealth and ſtrength, as will enable us ſtill to hold up our heads among the mighty ones of the earth: and by reſtoring us to the loſt dominion of the ſeas, make us riſe, *like a giant refreſhed with wine*, ſuperior to our diſtreſſes, and greater by our fall.

OBJEC-

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IN oppoſition to the doctrine laid down in the preceding ſheets, it has been aſſerted that nine millions ſix hundred thouſand pounds a year, is not ſufficient to defray the expence of a war; as is evident from the ſupplies of the two laſt wars, which very conſiderably exceeded that ſum.

Surely this is no ſerious argument! It ſuppoſes us to continue in the ſame track, which has led us to the brink on which we ſtand: and if ſuch is the determination, *actum eſt de republica*, there is no power in man to ſave us from deſtruction.

But with ſo much experience over our heads, it is to be hoped, that we have not only ſeen, but repented the folly and infatuation of our late proceedings; and are ſo tremblingly alive to the ſenſe of what is paſt, as to dread a repetition of them more than death.

Therefore ſetting aſide this argument, as embracing a propoſition too palpably abſurd

to ſtand in need of further refutation, the author ſeems to be warranted in the expreſſion, That the ſum propoſed is fully ſufficient to anſwer all our *future purpoſes*, either of attack or defence.

If it is urged in reply, that this mode of reaſoning is more plauſible than convincing, being the offspring of hope rather than certainty, it may be ſtrengthened by this further declation, That in contemplating our own altered ſituation, and the new intereſts which have ariſen in the world, it ſeems to ſtrike the mind as a *moral impoſſibility*, that this country can ever again be engaged in ſo general and expenſive a war.

But even admitting the poſſibility, would it be right to forego the benefit of an inſtitution, in all other reſpects efficient, becauſe it is juſt barely poſſible that a contingency may be engendered in the womb of time, for which this propoſal has made no ſuitable proviſion? As well might a man, having ſcarce any other means of precarious ſupport, refuſe to accept the inheritance of an eſtate to which honors and great advantage were annexed, merely becauſe

becauſe it was ſituate in an iſland, and might ſome time or other be overwhelmed in the ſea.

Beſides, if ſuch an event ſhould take place, does it follow that we muſt neceſſarily carry on the war at the ſame boundleſs expence? can no material ſavings be made? Then indeed have the two laſt wars been conducted with the niceſt attention to frugality; which if any will aſſert, it can be only ſuch as thoſe, who ſhutting their eyes againſt the light of the ſun, would maintain, ſpite of their own better knowledge, that the earth is inveloped in midnight darkneſs.

As the point in diſpute may receive ſome further illuſtration from a comparative view of the expence of former wars, let us examine the amount of the higheſt expenditure in any one year in the following reigns:—*viz.*

	A. D.	£.
William III.	1693 -	10565089
Ann - -	1709 -	11890893
George I. -	1722 -	9685012
George II. -	1760 -	19060039
George III. -	1782 -	26636579

By

By comparing theſe ſeveral ſums with that which has been herein provided, the particulars of which proviſion are as follows:

	£.
Cuſtoms - -	3000 000
Salt and Stamps -	1200 000
Intereſt - -	8000 000
Taxes - -	9600 000
	21,800 000

The ſum provided appears, upon the face of it, to be more than double what was expended in any one year in the reign of William III. or George I. not quite double the higheſt expenditure of Queen Anne's reign; almoſt three millions above the moſt expenſive year of Mr. Pitt's all glorious war: yet ſtrange to tell, it falls ſhort of the ſum conſumed in the unfortunate 1782 nearly five millions of money. All theſe appearances, however, are deluſive. We muſt take into the account the difference of the article of intereſt at this time and the periods alluded to, before we can eſtabliſh a fair compariſon. Under the preſent regulation the intereſt is fixt at eight millions, in 1760 it was not more than

than 4409797l. the difference is 3591797l. which being added to the expence of that year produces 22651836l. the ſum which would have been expended *cæteris paribus* in the year we have named.

As to the outgoings of the year 1782, we muſt, in conſidering them, proceed in a different way; the intereſt of that year being more than eight millions, the exceſs muſt be deducted; and if we take the intereſt at 9393137l. as ſtated in the ninth page of this work, the groſs ſum will be reduced thereby to 25243442l.

What ſavings might have been made in theſe or any other years of extraordinary expence, the author does not pretend to determine. It is a queſtion of very difficult ſolution, and as ſuch, he begs leave to ſubmit it to the adept in thoſe reſearches; reſerving in the mean time to all others, the liberty of forming their own conjectures.

But admitting that no material ſavings can be made; and admitting the probability of our being engaged again in wars as expenſive as the laſt, which, of all bad lights, is the

worſt

worſt in which we can place it; even in this point of view, taking one year with another, the proviſion which is made is a match for the diſburſements. The truth of this aſſertion will appear by the annexed columns of expence, which contain the total revenue as paid into the Exchequer in the following years:

A. D.	*£.*
1777 - -	15621763
1778 - - -	17934009
1779 - -	18816109
1780 - - -	24136200
1781 - -	25009712
1782 - - -	26636579
Grand Total	128154372

In which period of ſix years, the annual ſum as propoſed by the author, *viz.* 21800000l. making an accumulation of 130800000l. leaves a balance in our favour of 2645628l.

From the evidence of theſe facts, it is clear, that the ſum in queſtion would have been ſufficient in all caſes that have hitherto occurred. For even in the laſt war, which in the article of expence, and indeed in many other reſpects,

ſpects, was a maſterpiece of its kind; even in that memorable inſtance, had the preſent plan been adopted before we ſtarted, we might have terminated our mad career, with this ſatisfaction at leaſt, that we had not incurred, by the experiment, a ſingle ſhilling of debt.

Another objection has been made.——That in caſe of war, money will be wanted immediately, whereas a ſupply by taxes cannot be brought forward in leſs time than a year.

To obviate this difficulty it will be neceſſary to make a depoſit in the treaſury of a ſum ſufficient to defray the expence of the firſt year of the war. This may be done by continuing the taxes one year after the commencement of this regulation, the produce of which being depoſited as above, removes the objection, by eſtabliſhing a fund which may be fingered upon the ſhorteſt notice. And having thus provided means for the ſervices of the firſt year of the war, the taxes of that firſt year will furniſh a ſupply for the ſecond; the taxes of the ſecond for the third; and ſo on in regular ſucceſſion, till we cloſe the ſcene; and

with the taxes of the laſt year of the war, replace the depoſit.

From what has been ſaid it is manifeſt that as ſoon as war is at an end, there is an end of taxes alſo. We may therefore compare the diſtreſſes of war to the circumſtances of a dream, which affect us no longer than we remain under the influence of ſleep: Or we may liken them to the preſſure of an incubus, highly perplexing for the time, and grievous to be borne, but which leaving us with ſtrength and vigour unimpaired, only wakens us to the enjoyment of new delight.

Theſe obſtructions removed, there remains yet another in our way, which is ſaid to be inſurmountable, *viz.* That by diſbanding the body of people employed in the department of taxes, you will not be able to muſter them again of a ſudden, ſo as to anſwer the immediate exigencies of the ſtate. For however lightly it may be thought of by perſons unacquainted with the nature of the buſineſs, the department of taxes is *a great and wonderful machine*, the knowledge, and right management of which, acquired by long and painful appli-

application, and only made familiar by practice, would ſoon be loſt thro' diſuſe, irrecoverable within the compaſs of time we could ſpare for that purpoſe.

This argument, if it proves any thing, proves too much: as by parity of reaſoning, we ought to continue our army upon the war eſtabliſhment, and our navy alſo: for notwithſtanding what has been ſaid, it is ſurely as difficult a taſk to manufacture a good ſeaman or ſoldier as it is to conſtruct an accountant, a taxgatherer, or even an officer of exciſe.

As to the *ipſe dixit* declaration which the objector has added, by way of eſtabliſhing his fact, candor itſelf muſt allow, it has more the appearance of trick than fair-dealing: for when any man attempts to make a myſtery of thoſe things which plain common ſenſe can make itſelf maſter of without the aid of a miracle, moſt aſſuredly he means to deceive you. If this conſtruction gives offence to any perſon, let him firſt explain what there is of ſuch peculiar intricacy in the buſineſs of the taxes, to entitle it to ſo pompous a diſtinction. Might we not ſay, with infinitely more apparent pro-

priety, that a line of battle ſhip is a great and wonderful machine, that an army is the ſame? yet we have never been at a loſs to give motion and effect to either of theſe when occaſion required it.

It may be ſaid, however, that the compariſon does not hold, inaſmuch as the navy and army are only reduced, not wholly diſbanded and paid off; whereby even in time of peace numbers being trained to the uſe of arms, and a ſeafaring life, we are enabled, with the aſſiſtance of the half-pay liſt, and the two great ſeminaries for the profeſſion of arms, the militia on one hand, and the merchant ſhips on the other, to go forth with ſuch powerful armaments on the firſt bluſh of a war.

Neither is it intended that the body of men employed in the department of taxes ſhould be wholly turned adrift: ſome conſiderable portion of them muſt neceſſarily remain, to collect and regulate the payments which are here pointed out. And when the exigencies of ſtate require the ſervice of the greater number, the half-pay liſt in this caſe, as well as in the other inſtances adduced, together with the legion

gion of quilmen which may be collected from the counting houſes and deſks of our traders and merchants, will enable us without any manner of doubt, *in one little month*, to give motion and regularity to this great and wonderful machine.

Having now gone through the whole of the objections, and opened a free paſſage for the exerciſe of the judgment; let the unbiaſſed reader determine, whether the ſcheme is really ſuch as it has been repreſented to be, viſionary and unavailing, or whether it is not rather practicable in all its parts, and effectual to the end propoſed.

QUERIES

QUERIES ANSWERED.

QUESTION I. Whether men, whoſe commodity is labour, do not emigrate to get employment, and not to avoid taxes? How then would the propoſed abolition of taxes put a ſtop to emigrations?

ANSWER. For this plain reaſon—becauſe ſuch men, as are named, would no longer have occaſion to emigrate. There are not wanting thoſe who would gladly employ them *now*, but by reaſon of the taxes are unable to do ſo. Eaſed of that burden, induſtry would ſoon find full employment, in all the various ſhapes it can aſſume.

QUEST. II. If there are more men in a ſtate that can be uſefully employed, whether the ſurplus had not better emigrate than ſtay at home, and live upon the bread by others earned? Then wherefore all this dread of emigrations? The wiſer bees have no ſuch fear about them. Their policy directs them to compel the drones to quit the hive; expelling them

them, on pain of death, from their community for ever.

ANS. It is the blame of taxes if there are more people in this country than can be uſefully employed. That obſtruction removed, the tone would ſoon be changed, the cry would be—*All hands at work—make ready merchandiſe for all the various markets of the world.* The preſent ſurplus had, therefore, much better be kept at home to live and enrich themſelves, and the ſtate, in the manner propoſed, than turned adrift, becauſe we have not work, thro' lack of public virtue, to detain them. As to that which is ſaid of the bees, it does not by any means apply, They drive away the drones, and not the bees of induſtry, however numerous. Much wiſer than ourſelves, it is their practice, in proportion to their numbers, to extend their works, and keep their citizens at home, as we ſhould do from their example.

QUEST. III. Whether a petition to parliament for the adoption of this plan, would not pave the way to an equal land-tax?

ANS.

ANS. The way is paved already; and we now lye at the mercy of *the firſt miniſter* who has obſtinate valour enough to riſk himſelf and his ſituation upon the ſucceſs of the meaſure. The plan propoſed is the only one that has yet been deviſed, which will effectually defeat a project, that has more than once been the ſubject of debate in cabinet-councils.

QUEST. IV. Whether emergencies would not ſpeedily ariſe to demand the revival of all our preſent taxes, one after another, even in time of peace? And whether it is not highly probable, in the ſucceſs of this plan, that many of us may live to ſee that fatal day return?

ANS. In the ſucceſs of this plan, it is not at all likely that any of us ſhould live to ſee the revival of taxes in time of peace; ſo little ſo, that there is no probability of ſuch revival in any period of time, becauſe it provides amply for all contingencies which human wiſdom can foreſee. But failing of ſucceſs, it is highly probable, nay certain, that in the event of another war, which is not diſtant,

" Miſ-

" Miſchief muſt and will enſue, ſuch as the ſun's all-piercing eye hath not yet looked upon in this country." *

QUEST. V. Whether it would be ſafe to change the preſent ſyſtem of taxation, under which, the trade, manufactures, and agriculture of the kingdom have ariſen to ſuch amazing perfection? And whether taxation, conſidered as a ſtimulus to provoke our induſtry, is not abſolutely neceſſary to the well-being of the ſtate?

ANS. If there is any credit to be given to the old obſervation, *out of debt, out of danger*, then is it ſafer to adopt the plan recommended by the author, than that which is now in uſe. As to the circumſtance of our trade, manufactures, and agriculture, they have moſt undoubtedly flouriſhed under the preſent ſyſtem of taxation. They have flouriſhed in like manner under the preſent ſyſtem of corruption—under the venality of the repreſentative and conſtituent bodies—under the undue influence

* Vide the Appendix. Sir Francis Blake's ſpeech in the Alnwick meeting.

of the crown, and under every other miſchief which has crept into the ſtate. But have they flouriſhed by virtue of theſe abuſes? Will you give that merit to taxes, which is due only to labour? I have heard that induſtry had encreaſed our ability to bear the encreaſing burdens of the ſtate, but that taxes were a neceſſary ſpur to induſtry, or that the latter had ſprung out of the former, is a doctrine as new to me as it is perfectly ſtrange. Enquire of the huſbandman, to what circumſtance he is indebted for a plentiful harveſt. Will he not ſay, *To the ſweat of my brow, and the favour of elements?* How would he ſtare if he were told, that he is obliged for the plenty which fills his garners to the invigorating principle of taxes —to that which raiſes the price of labour—to that which cramps him in his ability to cultivate and improve his land. If you ſhould tell him this, in what manner would he deign to notice the abſurdity? By ſhaking his head and walking away.

QUEST. VI. Whether there are not many thouſands in this kingdom, who are neither pro-

proprietors of land, nor holders of ſtock, nor lenders of money, who nevertheleſs, are living well, conſuming much, and paying cheerfully? How then, in the name of common-ſenſe, would the proprietors of land be gainers by the bargain, by taking the proportion of taxes of this claſs of men upon themſelves, in addition to their own? Would they be benefited by paying a much larger proportionable ſum, under the appellation of a rent-charge, than now is paid under the name of a tax? Can this be looked upon as a conſideration, to tempt, requite, and juſtify our acquieſcence in this mighty innovation? Will any man of prudence patroniſe a ſcheme which is evidently calculated to lighten his pocket? Can any reaſonable perſon expect it, when ſo far from being gainers, as he has aſſerted, all men of property will be loſers by the bargain? In fine, what milder inference can be drawn from theſe premiſes, and from his readineſs to part with his money, than to ſay, that the author is one of thoſe, of whom no very honorable mention is made in a certain proverb, too appoſite to be miſunderſtood or miſapplied in the caſe before us?

ANS. That there are many thouſands in this kingdom, who come within the deſcription above-named, is not to be controverted. And there are ſome few likewiſe, in whoſe degenerate minds, to the diſgrace of human nature, no other idea of gain can find admittance, but that of lucre only. To ſuch as theſe, who are incapable of feeling the force of an argument, which is not drawn from poſitive but comparative advantage, the propoſal in queſtion will give no ſatisfaction. Wrapped up in the ſingle conſideration of ſelf, theſe purblind mortals exclaim, " It will lighten the pocket," not conſidering in how much greater proportion it will lighten the heart alſo. Happy only in the proſpect of evading the payment, they circulate a report, and would have it believed that the author has been deceiving us with falſe pretences—" that ſo far from being gainers, as he has aſſerted, all men of property will be loſers by the bargain." How can any perſon have the face to practice ſo groſsly upon the credulity of others, as to draw concluſions from half ſentences, in order to father upon me ſo ſtrange an aſſertion? How can any

any man be weak enough to imagine that he will be able to avail himſelf of ſo poor an expedient, to eſtabliſh a fact diametrically oppoſite to the doctrine which I have laboured to inculcate, which I have taken ſo much pains to reconcile to the prejudices of my countrymen? To expiate our manifold political ſins by a pecuniary peace-offering is that atonement which I have preſumed to be not only neceſſary but unavoidable. Is it fair then, becauſe it was ſaid, "I much queſtion whether there is a man in the kingdom who will not think himſelf a gainer by the bargain." Is it fair, candid or becoming, to reaſon from thence, as if no more had been ſaid, ſuppreſſing that which immediately follows, to clear the ſenſe and mark my meaning;—"taking along with the propoſition, the comforts that attend it." As to the proverb, by which is clearly meant, that my wit may be gaged by my willingneſs to part with my money, I have only to obſerve, that whatever may be ſaid or thought of me in that reſpect by others, believe me, gentle reader, I am no more diſpoſed than yourſelf to give away my property upon

upon ſlender grounds, or for uſeleſs purpoſes. The cruel neceſſity by which we are required to offer up at the ſhrine of our country the deſtined ſacrifice, is lamented by me as much as by any man. The difference lies in this, that I am willing to make a virtue of neceſſity, and if that is a mark of folly, ſet me down, I pray you, as foremoſt on the liſt. I wiſh with all my heart a better bargain could have been made; but blame not me becauſe it is ſuch as it is, provided it is the beſt that the circumſtances of the caſe will allow.

It is admitted on all hands, that ſomething muſt be done which may prove effectual to turn aſide the dreadful train of calamities expectant upon a ſtate of public bankruptcy in a popular government. *That effectual ſomething* has now been thrice in this manner ſubmitted to the conſideration of my countrymen; of which the diſtinguiſhing features are theſe, —that it is equal to what is required, *viz.* the great work of our political redemption; and that the load which it lays is diſtributed in ſuch fair proportion to the relative ſtrength of the parties, that all alike have neighbours fare.

Admitting

Admitting then that our preſent ſituation is an evil—admitting that the mode of relief which is here deviſed, is likewiſe an evil, we are ſo far agreed, and all that remains is to exerciſe our judgment, as wiſdom ſhall direct, in the choice of alternatives. For this purpoſe let us look back to all we have ſuffered already, and then we ſhall ſee that in little more than half a century, we have ſquandered away the ſixth part of our property: and had not our own induſtry kept pace with the profuſion of miniſters, one half had been gone. Let us look forward to what we muſt yet undergo, if we madly purſue the beaten path to ruin.—Let us conſider what we ſhall eſcape by deviating therefrom in the manner propoſed, and then determine which of the two is to be preferred—that ſituation which never can be better, and muſt eventually be worſe; or that which never can be worſe, and may be as much better as we pleaſe. Conſult with Sir Richard, * and he will tell you, that drugs

* Sir Richard Jebb, Bart. M. D. deſervedly eſteemed the head of his profeſſion.

which

which operate powerfully in desperate cases, must not be rejected, because they are unpalatable; and more particularly, when they come recommended, like the present medicine, by these peculiar good properties—that it may be administered with safety—that it is certain in its operation—that it will not only remove, but extirpate the disease; not by dint of repeated doses, and a long tedious course of pharmacy, but like the operation of a charm, like the touch of divinity, will restore us in an instant from long lost health, to strength and vigor little short of immortality. And are not these very sufficient considerations to tempt us to acquiesce in so mighty an innovation? And in this light viewed, is not the author justified in the use of that expression—"We should be gainers by the bargain, were it even in addition to our present burdens."

IT is my custom to enter minutes of all objections which have been made, within my hearing, to this proposal, either in promiscuous company, in private conversation, or have otherwise come to my knowledge, by the report

port of friends. In reviſing of which, previous to the final adjuſtment of the preſs, an objection has been diſcovered, well deſerving note, tho' hitherto paſt by in ſilence.

It ſtates, that taxes on conſumption are the faireſt, the moſt equal, the leaſt burdenſome, as well as the moſt favourable to liberty, and the diſpoſition of Engliſhmen, of any that can be deviſed, becauſe the contribution is voluntary. The conſumer weighs with himſelf his ability to bear the tax before he purchaſes, he feels himſelf under no particular reſtraint, as he has it in his choice to with-hold his mite, or contribute in any proportion he thinks fit, to the wants of the ſtate.

How widely different from this is the ſyſtem of taxation which the author propoſes to ſubſtitute in its place. By his plan, the individual muſt pay, not becauſe *he conſumes*, but becauſe *he poſſeſſes*. He is no longer left to judge of his own ability to bear the tax. The contribution is no longer voluntary. The option which was in him is done way, and he muſt at any rate contribute, however much he may diſapprove the mode, however greatly the payment may embarraſs his affairs.

To which I anſwer—If this at any period was an objection of weight, 'tis now no longer ſo. The time is come when it will not only militate againſt the plan in queſtion, but with tenfold additional force againſt that alſo which is now in practice. The late regulation, introduced to the houſe under the patronage of the miniſter, lays the ax to the root of voluntary payments; and much I fear the ſtroke will be followed up, till the foreſt of liberty, of which this is a principal tree, is levelled to the ground. Already too much deſpoiled of our rights, nothing is wanting to compleat our thraldom, but compulſive payments under the preſent ſyſtem of taxation, where miniſters have the fingering of the public money. I feel it, therefore, as a duty which I owe to my country, not to leave it untold, tho' it grieves me to ſay,—That the miniſter who recommended this meaſure, not aware of the conſequence, is unequal to his ſituation. If differently circumſtanced in point of foreſight, diſtinguiſh him, as your favourite, by what other appellation you pleaſe, but do not heap *inſult upon injury* by calling him—The friend of his country.

The

The preſent juncture, too fatally favourable to bad deſigns, is aided and abetted by our own demeanour. So true is the old obſervation, *our debt is enſlaving us daily*. That exquiſite and agonizing ſenſe of liberty, which alone is equal to the labour of preſerving it, and which upon all proper occaſions was kindled to a flame in the breaſt of our anceſtors, is no where now to be found among us. Inured to reſtraint by the preſſure of taxes, our feelings are blunted to ſuch an exceſs, we tend without perceiving it to abſolute vaſſalage. Neither is there any other way left, that is equally ſafe, juſt, practicable and efficient, by means of which we may extricate ourſelves, relieve the ſtate and ſave our liberties, independent of that which is here pointed out. The public debt transferred to individuals, will loſe the ſting that now annoys us. It will operate, and indeed will become to all intents and purpoſes a private incumbrance, from which every man of prudence may gradually relieve himſelf. To lay our account for any ſubſtantial good to be derived from ſinking funds and piece meal payments, is to throw away experience. Beſides, the miſchief

which we deprecate and dread, is too close at our heels for any reasonable man to entertain the smallest expectation of relief from such proceedings. Ministers indeed, to keep up an appearance of patriotism, while they laugh in their sleeve at our credulity, do still endeavour to amuse and cajole us with distant visionary hopes of restitution. But in truth, there never was, nor is, nor ever will be a minister of this country, how fair soe'er he may comport himself to outward view, possessed of a sincere intention to reduce materially, much less to annihilate the national debt, because it involves the annihilation of his own importance.

It is not, therefore, that we must look up to, or place dependance upon ministers, or on those who aspire to that painful pre-eminence, but wholly on ourselves. It rests with us, with the good people of England, by our own act and deed, to expiate and make attonement for the sins of the nation; and *by a sacrifice, whose light and heat shall pass the confines of the earth, whose fragrancy shall mount to heaven, draw down the blessings of the God of mercy on us.*

PART

PART II.

THE ABOLITION OF TYTHES;

AND THE

Reform of the Church Revenue.

IN order to make theſe meaſures the more palatable, particularly to the landed intereſt, on whoſe ſhoulders the principal part of the burden is to reſt, let theſe regulations be accompanied with a *Nullum Tempus bill*,* reſpecting the claims of the church. And let that be followed up by another bill, effecting the abolition, *in toto*, of that hateful practice of tithing, which has done more harm

* A bill of this kind was paſt a few years ſince reſpecting the claims of the Crown.

to

to the cauſe of religion, than all the immorality of the world put together.

For this purpoſe, let every proprietor of land be obliged to purchaſe the tithes of his eſtate, by a fair valuation of their worth at the current price of land: not, however, by an actual payment of the principal ſum, but by ſubjecting his property to the regular diſcharge of intereſt thereon at the rate of four per cent.

Theſe points ſecured, let there be made a more righteous diſtribution of the property of the church: firſt, by grubbing up the ſuckers, and lopping off all uſeleſs limbs, which ſerve only to disfigure the tree, or deprive the extremities of their proper nouriſhment: and afterwards, by making a ſuitable proviſion for every neceſſary branch, which is left remaining, of that venerable ſtock.

As my meaning, which is figuratively expreſt in the foregoing paragraph, may be liable to miſconſtruction, I will add a few words by way of explanation.

I admit that the pariſh prieſt who does his duty, is a *neceſſary branch*; but when I have ſaid

ſaid this, I have ſaid all that I meant to expreſs: for in truth, there is neither uſe, beauty, nor profit, in any other. Therefore let all other branches of this wide-ſpreading tree, that is to ſay, let all other names and appointments in the church eſtabliſhment, ſave only that which I have mentioned, and the order of prelates, be got rid of for ever.

But as large amputations are attended with danger, it behoves us to act with caution in this particular. If the meaſure is approved, a few years will prune them all to our hands; and it is better to wait the ſlow, but ſafe and certain operation of time, than run any riſk in ſo material a concern.

There are ſome, I know, who will reprobate the exception which is made reſpecting the prelacy; but I have acted in this caſe under the influence of a ſtrong conviction, that the order, with ſome little amendment, may be made uſeful to the ſtate, and of ſervice to religion.

The next point to be diſcuſſed is the maintenance of the inferior clergy, which under this new regulation are reduced to one ſingle claſs.

claſs. The duties of whoſe ſtation being preciſely the ſame, why ſhould they not be placed upon a footing of equality in other reſpects? Can any reaſon be aſſigned for a diſtinction in this caſe? or can any one ſay, when the *whole duty* of the church is at preſent performed *for half a million*, that it would be doing an unhandſome thing to ſet aſide, for the ſame purpoſe, four times as much as is now received?

This regulation is replete with innumerable good conſequences; I will name ſome few of them, and leave the reſt to the diſcernment of my readers.

It ſtrikes at the root of pluralities; an abuſe which calls loudly for redreſs. It furniſhes a ſuitable proviſion for all the inferior clergy: whereas now there are ſome of them moſt ſhamefully deſtitute. It cuts off all hope and expectation of advantage from change of place; ſo that over whatever diſtrict a clergyman is appointed to preſide, there he will ſet himſelf down, I truſt, contented; and having a mind free from the interruption of worldly concerns, it is a fair inference to ſuppoſe, that he will

will devote all his time and attention to the benevolent duties of his office.

And as there will remain, no doubt, after theſe contingencies are ſatisfied, a very conſiderable overplus,* let it go in further relief of the land, as a proviſion for the poor.

And here let no man pretend to ſay that I have ſacrilegiouſly laid my hands upon the patrimony of the church. The regulation is perfectly agreeable to the original intention of the donors. For tithes were firſt granted, in part, for the maintenance of the clergy; and in part for the relief of the poor; ſo that originally the clergy were only the diſtributors of thoſe alms.

But, perverting this good deſign, as the corruption of the order encreaſed, they began to appropriate more and more of them to their own uſe; and, at length, taking advantage of the ſupineneſs of the laity, and the debaſement of their minds, by religious fears, they boldly put in their claim to the whole, as their

* The revenue of the church is computed at two millions and a half, and upwards: we may therefore conclude that the overplus will not fall ſhort of half a million.

own, by *right divine*. Leaving the poor to the mercy of heaven, or the tender bowels of thoſe, who, like the good Samaritan, and *not like the Prieſt*, could not paſs, without looking upon their diſtreſs, and adminiſtering relief.

To proceed. The clergy of thoſe days, wiſe in their own generation, as the children of Mammon, foreſeeing that the time would come when the eyes of the world would be opened, took care to ſecure to themſelves a further title, under the plea of *common-right*.

Laſt of all, though it bared the face of their former impoſitions, and as if any thing could give additional ſtrength to *common-right* and *right divine*, they thought fit to call in *human laws* to their aſſiſtance.

And thus armed at all points, their ſucceſſors, thoſe *miniſters of peace*, and *preachers of ſelf-denial*, have ever ſince been in a ſtate of continual warfare for the good things of this world.

But to return from this digreſſion. Let us not, in this general reform, which is intended to adminiſter comfort to ſo many individuals, let

let us not be inattentive to the tears of the diſconſolate widow, too often left deſtitute; nor turn away from the cries of the helpleſs orphan.

As a proviſion for theſe, let the widow be entitled to her thirds: and in caſe of the previous death of the mother, or if ſhe does not ſurvive her huſband ten years, let the ſtipend be continued for the maintenance and education of the children, during the whole of that term, or the remainder of it, as the caſe may happen.

And whereas I have ſaid that the overplus of the ſpoils of the church ſhall go in aid of the land, as a proviſion for the poor; it may not be amiſs, on further conſideration, to appropriate a certain proportion of thoſe ſavings, as a collateral proviſion for orphans left deſtitute, after the expiration of ten years, or the death of their mother.

For of all the poor, thoſe, no doubt, have the beſt claim to our pity and aſſiſtance, who have been brought up in eaſe and plenty, and are reduced, by no fault of their own, to miſery and want.

Nothing now remains to make this reformation compleat, but to ſecure the independence of the bench of biſhops; which can in no other way be ſo well effected, as by putting *an end to tranſlations.*

To whatever ſee a biſhop is appointed, there let him remain; and in order to remove every objection at once, let them all be put upon an equality in reſpect of emolument, the two archbiſhops excepted, and let them be made equal inpoint of profit between themſelves; but double in point of proportion to the reſt. That is to ſay, let every biſhop receive a clear payment of 3000l. a year, and the two archbiſhops 6000l. per annum a-piece.

In order ſtill more to ſmooth the way to this neceſſary reform, let *the ladies* be enliſted on our ſide, by giving them the *title and rank* of their huſbands.

And here again I might enter upon a freſh field of advantages, which will accrue to the ſtate, to the cauſe of religion, and the peace of ſociety, by the abolition of tithes and the independence of the biſhops: but as what I have ſaid, when ſpeaking of taxes, may be urged

urged with equal propriety in the preſent caſe, I ſhall conclude with repeating, That it cannot be neceſſary to enter upon a detail of thoſe advantages in proof of a ſelf-evident fact.

I have now only to add, that it was my firſt intention to have prefixed my name to this little work, but conſulting with a judicious friend upon the occaſion, his arguments coinciding with my own cooler thoughts, were concluſive againſt it.

That I ſhould have all good men on my ſide would be my comfort; but as there are, no doubt, ſome bad men in the world, all ſuch as ſworn enemies to reform, would unite againſt me. And, when no good purpoſe can be ſerved by it, why ſhould I put myſelf in the way of danger, which is ſo eaſily avoided without diſgrace?

If what I have projected is approved, and the nation is permitted to reap the benefit of my deſign, I have attained to the conſummation of my wiſhes.

Not that I mean, by ſtanding aloof, to reject the praiſe of good men, or ſet that at nought which is at once the ſtrongeſt incitement

ment to virtue, and its beſt reward. No perſon can put that conſtruction upon the caſe, as all muſt know, if any praiſe ſhall attend me, that it will not be more ſparingly beſtowed becauſe the author lies concealed; neither ſhall I enjoy it the leſs, becauſe it is in ſecret. On the contrary, it will acquire thereby a ſuperior reliſh; ſince it will prove, beyond a poſſibility of contradiction, that I could have no other end to anſwer, by this publication, but the good of my country.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE ſecond edition of this eſſay was in the preſs, when the biſhop of Landaff's letter to the arch-biſhop of Canterbury, ſince deceaſed, was put into my hands. The pleaſure which I felt, when I found that our object was the ſame, however we might vary in the means of attaining it, is not to be deſcribed. And in full confidence of a generous people to reſcue me from the ſuſpicion of ſo mean an artifice as intending a ſide-wind compliment to myſelf, I

ſhall

ſhall not heſitate to give this public teſtimony of my admiration of a character ſo truly chriſtian and praiſe worthy, as his lordſhip has diſplayed thro' the medium of his late publication.

There is, however, one point, in which I apprehend the worthy prelate is miſtaken. It reſpects the preſent revenue of the church, to which a value is aſſigned one million a year ſhort of that which it is repreſented to be in the foregoing ſheets: the two ſums being to each other in the proportion of three to five.

It is poſſible his lordſhip may have founded his opinion upon the authority of calculations not recently made; and if ſo, the variation is eaſily accounted for. The value of eſtates, and ſuch, in particular, as are ſituate at any conſiderable diſtance from the capital, where the ſpirit of improvements had not then made its way, having encreaſed within the century, to my certain knowledge, in a much greater proportion than that which is named.

Before I lay down my pen, as it is done with no invidious deſign to leſſen any man's deſervings, but merely to eſtabliſh a fact, I hope

hope I may be permitted to riſk a comment upon the following extract.—" Some deans and chapters have, with a very laudable diſintereſtedneſs, appropriated a tenth, or a larger part of their annual fines, to the repair of the fabrick of their churches" Upon which paſſage I beg leave to obſerve, with all due deference to better information, that the revenue which the church is in poſſeſſion of, was not granted, as implied by the words I have quoted, to the ſole purpoſe of ſupporting the clergy, but expreſsly for the four following diſtinct uſes: *viz.* For the poor one part; another part for the maintenance of the parochial clergy; another for the uſe of the monaſteries, and a fourth for *the repairs of church fabricks.*

From which it appears, that the deans and chapters, whoſe diſintereſtedneſs is made the ſubject of panegyric, have in this reſpect done no more than their duty. They have, however, this merit, which is more than many others can lay claim to; they have acted up to the intention of the donors, which aſſuredly no time ſhould deſeat.

The

THE

DOCTRINE

OF

Preſcription conſidered.

AN outcry having been raiſed againſt the principle of a *Nullum Tempus bill* reſpecting the claims of the church, as an unjuſt attack upon private property, it is become neceſſary for me to inveſtigate and explain the matter. And if in the courſe of my reaſoning a diſcovery is made, which muſt prove fatal, not only to future claims, but even to many of thoſe deciſions which have already been given in favour of the church, the blame of that loſs is not imputable to me, but reſts on the head of thoſe who provoked the enquiry.

All that is requiſite for this purpoſe is to conſider the nature, force, and extent of the term *Preſcription*.

For the better illuſtration of which, let us place preſcription before us as a familiar object of the ſenſes. Let us compare it to an arch. Conſidered in this light, that of the crown, which is the larger arch, is extended over all the real property in this kingdom. That of the church, a ſmaller arch, embraces but a part. Of which arch, in either caſe, former poſſeſſion is the key-ſtone. And as no arch can ſtand without its key, ſo neither can preſcription be ſupported without legal proof of former profeſſion.

The crown, as the fountain of property, bears that proof in its boſom. But it is otherwiſe with the church, which is not the fountain, but the reſervoir of tithes. The church poſſeſſes nothing by virtue of original right. It has no inherent title to tithes. The title which it has, is acquired, and as ſuch waits the proof, if called in queſtion. The poſſeſſions of the church are derived from the bounty of others, the donors are therefore,

more

more properly, the fountain. And as that which has not regularly flowed from the crown is ſtill in the crown; ſo, in like manner, that which has regularly flowed from the crown to the laity, and has not regularly flowed from thence to the church, is ſtill in the laity. That indeed which has regularly flowed through theſe channels, to the church, though loſt for a time, is ſtill, without any manner of doubt, their tangible property. In other words, where there is proof that any incumbent was heretofore in legal poſſeſſion of that which is now claimed by his ſucceſſor, that caſe is in point, but there are no other to which preſcription is applicable, or by virtue of which the claimant is entitled to a decree in his favour.

To ſay that preſcription will help any man to that which no one ever poſſeſſed in the ſame predicament with himſelf, is an abſurd idea. Omnipotent as this magician may ſeem, it is not in his power to create a right; all he can do is to recover that right which has once been loſt. If you join iſſue with us in this definition, or whether you join or not, it is the buckler of truth, and will not fail us. It

remains with you, therefore, my reverend friends, to ſhew your right. Prove your poſſeſſion. Make it appear that you have done ſo, and I will anſwer for it there is no laymen amongſt us, who has either honeſty or common ſenſe, that will reſiſt the claim.

But do not come over us with your *jure devino's*, and your other nonſenſical plea of *common right*. We are not now to be gulled by ſuch pretences. The inſufficiency, the abſurdity of which is manifeſt, from the evidence of thoſe very exceptions which you admit to be good. To be conſiſtent with yourſelves, you ſhould firſt ſet aſide thoſe exemptions, as ſome, indeed, have attempted to do. You ſhould next proceed to reclaim all that part of tithe-property which is now in our poſſeſſion; for doing of which you have ſufficient encouragement, when you are told from good authority—"That it was by *ſtrange means enough conveyed into lay-hands.*" If it is yours by right divine, or common right, it is not ours by

* Vide the Biſhop of Landaff's Letter to the Arch-biſhop of Canterbury.

any

any right. Then take it from us. Is this your aim, is this your drift, is this your meaning? Speak out! for if it is, I will give it the praiſe of a mighty daring. When you have accompliſhed it, nothing will remain behind, but to recover the ſupremacy of the church, and your empire is re-eſtabliſhed for ever.

I cannot proceed without offering an apology to the good biſhop for the application of that ſentence, which as too appoſite to my purpoſe, I have quoted from his letter. To do juſtice to a character, which I verily believe to be without blemiſh, I have no difficulty in ſaying that the preſent conſtruction, tho' it is eaſy and natural, did not occur to his lordſhip. At a time when the ſeeds of diſſatisfaction are ſhooting up rank and ſpontaneous in the minds of his brethern, inſtead of checking, to have encouraged their growth, by throwing reflections upon certain paſt proceedings, in the uſe of an expreſſion which ſtrikes at the root of their validity; and to have done this deſignedly, I can no more think of imputing to the biſhop of Landaff, than I can credit that there is a ſettled purpoſe in churchmen,

men, or in myſelf who abhor it, to bring about the reſtoration of popery. But it is certainly a very aukward expreſſion, and I dare ſay his lordſhip will think ſo, when he views it in the light in which I have placed it. It is moreover an expreſſion forming a part of a ſentence which has no particular buſineſs there; for which reaſons, I have no expectation of finding it in the next impreſſion of his letter.

To return to my argument.—One thing is perfectly clear, that in all caſes of transfer, nothing is conveyed which is not compriſed in the grant. The conduct of laymen has kept pace with this idea. When was it known that the landholder was mounted ſo high on the pinnacle of preſumption, as to venture to lay claim to that which is not contained in his grant? There is no inſtance of the kind. No not even in the caſe, when that which is wanting to ground his property was left out by miſtake.

For the credit of the tithe-holder, would I could ſay the ſame of him. The tithe-holder on the other hand, by which I mean the church,

I bluſh

I bluſh to ſay the reformed church, that church which is preſumed to be the pattern of forbearance, the ſtandard of tender conſcience, acting in all reſpects up to the true ſpirit of the goſpel, that church, I ſay, puts in a claim.—To what? To that which from the evidence of ages has never been in payment. To that of which there is no proof ſet up, no, not even the pretence or ſhadow of proof of former poſſeſſion.—To that which in fair conſtruction, from the long teſtimony of their own ſilent acquieſcence, confeſſedly, was never due.—To that of which the very name,* in many parts where it is now claimed, was not known till of late, nor yet fully underſtood, but as a barefaced innovation of the clergy, ſubverſive of religion as productive of enmity, and big with ruin to themſelves, as calculated to raiſe a ſpirit, which if it chance to break forth,

Tho' now they reſt on eider beds,
Tho' now they liſt their mitred heads,
Tho' to their twiſted ſtrength they truſt,
Will quickly lay their pride in duſt.

* Agiſtment.

From

From what has been ſaid, it is obvious that the proper defence againſt the claims of the clergy, is to put them upon proof of former poſſeſſion: for preſcription having reference only to the recovery of poſſeſſion, till that is made appear, preſcription is altogether impotent, and of no avail.

If any one is hardy enough to deny this, let him look to the conſequence. The denial involves this moſt dangerous propoſition,—That the preſcription of the church is paramount to the preſcription of the crown; a doctrine too bold for any prieſt, or any high-prieſt in theſe our days, to maintain in this country.

It may, therefore, very well be laid down as a general rule, that the clergy are entitled to no other tithes but ſuch as they have been in the habit of receiving by virtue of their reſpective endowments, or ſuch as the cuſtom of the place, from long poſſeſſion, has ſanctified to them. All other tithes of whatever denomination, ſave thoſe alone which are admitted to be legally veſted in the hands of laymen, did belong to the crown, and not to the church,

as

as dormant rights, but are now for ever ſecured to the ſeveral proprietors of the land, by the late *Nullum Tempus bill.*

The *Nullum Tempus* which is now propoſed, is therefore of little importance to the laity, otherwiſe than as it will ſerve the cauſe of religion, by putting an immediate ſtop to the poſſibility of further litigation.

From this ſtatement of the caſe, ſupported as it is on either hand by truth and reaſon, this inference muſt be drawn—*That the preſent claims of the church are for the moſt part futile; and that all ſuch decrees as have already been given in favour of novel payments, are founded in error, and liable to reverſal.*

ABSTRACT of a Letter in anſwer to Objections which were ſtarted by a Friend.

You object to the following propoſition:—"The crown is the fountain of property," and controvert it by a caſe, the ſtrongeſt, I

 believe,

believe, that can poſſibly be brought to bear againſt it, *viz.*—"That there were formerly in this kingdom certain eſtates and patrimonies called allodial, which owed nothing to the crown but allegiance only."

This argument of yours is, indeed, a very powerful antagoniſt; I muſt, therefore, do my utmoſt to prevail upon him to deſert his colours, and come over to my ſide. That is to ſay, I muſt endeavour to prove that there is no land in this country which was not held either mediately or immediately of the crown: not even excepting allodial land, which of all others was the moſt free and independent.

For this purpoſe pleaſe to turn to Domeſday, and there you will find the ſubſequent words: *Quando moritur alodarius, rex inde habet relevationem terræ.* And what is this *relevatio terræ*, what is this relief? It is in fair conſtruction, a clear declaration of original right on the part of the crown; an unreſerved unequivocal acknowledgment of the ſame on the part of the heir. The caſe was this.—Upon the demiſe of any ſuch perſon, the land ſo held fell into the hands of the king; and there remained, in default

default of an heir, *tanquam terra revertens in poſſeſſione donatori ſive heredibus ſuis, poſt donum finitum.* But if an heir, conforming to the original compact, appeared, and made good his payment, he relieved his land, recovered poſſeſſion, and held it, paying, as you obſerve, nothing more to the crown, but *allegiance only.*

If further proof is wanting, do but attend to the word *revert*, which is as much as to ſay *return.* Now you, or I, or any man may go to a place where we have never been before, but we cannot return to a place of that deſcription. In like manner, land may paſs from one to another, but it cannot be ſaid to revert to you or me, except it had been previouſly yours or mine, or his from whom we claim. To bring this argument home to our own times. —Do not lands at this day, for want of lawful heirs, revert to the lord of the manor of whom thoſe lands are held? In default of whom, do they not ultimately revert to the crown? Seeing then that all lands may by time and chance revert to the crown, and that none can poſſibly revert where they had not been before, it follows from theſe premiſes, that

all lands did originally flow to individuals from the crown, and conſequently that *the crown is the fountain of property.*

You alledge in return, that the words I have quoted from Domeſday, have no reference whatever to the ſtate and condition of property before the conqueſt;—that they are not what I have ſuppoſed them to be, a clear declaration of ancient right, and the uſage of England; but of that agreement only, which taking place between the king and the people, did then give birth to the right in queſtion. The love of enterpriſe, as you obſerve, and martial fame, which was the character of the age, firſt paved the way for this great revolution in property. The barons ſeeming to vie with one another who ſhould be foremoſt to ſurrender their antient independent rights, in order to hold of the crown by military ſervice; an example which ran like wild-fire through all ranks and conditions of men.

Some few, indeed, were unwilling, and others through age or infirmities were unable to conform to this new regulation. It was therefore enacted, as Domeſday recites, with an

an eye particularly turned to theſe recuſants—*Quando moritur alodarius, rex inde habet relevationem terræ*; that is to ſay, upon the demiſe of any ſuch perſon, the tenure ſhall be changed, and the heir for the time to come ſhall pay a relief like other feudal tenants.

Be this as it may, the explanation, if juſt, does not go to invalidate the doctrine I would enforce, but rather helps, as you obſerve, to ſtrengthen and confirm the wavering mind in firm belief of theſe eſſential truths—that *the crown is the fountain of property*—and that *the church has no inherent title to tithes*. The firſt of which admits of no doubt from the date of Domeſday, that is to ſay, from the general eſtabliſhment of feudal tenures in England, which is far enough back for our purpoſe. And the latter is evident from this circumſtance, that the monaſteries before the diſſolution performed many feudal ſervices.

You mention another inſtance, where lands were bound by no kind of ſervice or rent to a ſuperior lord, *viz.* "Lands which were held by the church in frank-almoigne."

This

This fact is not to be denied. But happily it does not at all affect the validity of that maxim on which, as on a ſolid rock, my coloſſean arch is built. For though we ſhould admit the whole of this ſame land was held not only free of rent and ſervice, but every kind of ſtipulation, which is ſuppoſing a caſe that never did exiſt in ſo much latitude, this further proof will ſtill be wanting to the adverſe ſide—that the land in queſtion was poſſeſſed as conſtitutionally inherent in the church, was enjoyed as part and parcel of its own peculiar eſſence. No other proof but this can make impreſſion; no other efficient battery can be placed within reach of the ſtructure. Till this engine can be brought to bear againſt it, 'tis unaſſailable. It ſtands and ever muſt remain in ſtrength and beauty undiminſhed, unimpaired. Now, this inherent right you have not proved; this battering ram you have not brought into the field, neither indeed have you attempted to do ſo. But you have manfully, and upon good ground, aſſerted this very oppoſite truth, *viz.* That the poſſeſſions of the church either flowed to them directly from the crown, or indirectly through the channel

channel of ſome ſuperior lord. Your words are theſe:—" It appears manifeſt to me in " the courſe of my reading, that the endow- " ments of churches and cathedrals, be they " tithes, oblations, or lands, were royal bene- " ficencies, or the free gifts of well diſpoſed " and ſuperſtitious people. Some, indeed, " thought proper to reſerve by way of exemp- " tions from taxes, *&c.* part of their dona- " tions, and theſe, in all likelihood, are the " preſent tithes in diſpute."

You direct your attention in the next place to the following propoſition:—" One thing is perfectly clear, that in all caſes of transfer, nothing is conveyed which is not compriſed in the grant." You admit this to be a poſtulatum from which neither ſide can with-hold its aſſent. But yet a queſtion may ariſe, as in the caſe before us, reſpecting the *quantum* of that property which was meant to be conveyed.

To ſettle this material point, which indeed is the very bone of our contention, I call upon, and do appeal to you, and all the world except themſelves, nay ſurely to themſelves I may appeal;—is it not to give every advantage

which

which reaſon can expect—is it not to do all or more than juſtice could require, or candour's ſelf would recommend, to admit of that conſtruction of the words, which thoſe of their own body, their peculiar friends, have all along, by wilful and deliberate acts, not once, or twice, or twenty times, but evermore declared to be the true intent and meaning of the grant? And yet theſe pious men, oh fie upon it! ſpite of reaſon, candour, juſtice, and to theſe I may ſubjoin, in ſpite of honour, conſcience, truth and common ſenſe, have laid aſide the evidence of thoſe, whom intereſt, duty, inclination, prompted and impelled to do the very uttermoſt in their behalf. Exhibiting by this one ſpecial deed, to public view, themſelves, or thoſe that went before them, as fools or knaves, or both together.

As to that which is ſaid reſpecting the preſcription of the church, it is not intended, by what I have advanced, to moleſt the clergy in the peaceable enjoyment of their known rights; my only aim is to overthrow their title to novel claims; to put a ſtop to the preſent rage of demanding tithe of things in places where

where they had never before been in payment. Such, for inſtance, as the tithe of agiſtment, which in many parts where it is now claimed, was altogether unknown till the clergy of late attempted to introduce it. The pretence for which is this—that it is paid in other parts of England; not conſidering that where it is paid, there it is ſanctified by cuſtom immemorial and long poſſeſſion: or rather not admitting the plea; for the preſent doctrine of the church maintains an equal right diffuſed over the whole body, which though not exerciſed, is exerciſeable at pleaſure. But that man muſt have more faith than would ſuffice to move a mountain, who can believe that the clergy, till this time, were either ſo blind to their own intereſt as not to diſcern their right, or ſeeing it, that they had generoſity enough to make us a preſent of their property during ſo long a ſpace. This is a circumſtance ſo highly improbable, ſo far exceeding the bounds of human belief, that any perſon who weighs it, will find himſelf inclined to claſs it amongſt the number of phyſical impoſſibilities.

In conſidering the two caſes, the great difficulty which we find on the part of the church, is to reaſon ourſelves fairly into a belief of their right. On the part of the laity the greater difficulty occurs to reaſon ourſelves out of it. The features of the laymans plea appear ſo ſtrong, and carry ſuch conviction to the mind from their likeneſs to truth, that they have hitherto been deemed ſufficient to deter every conſcientious clergyman from meddling in the buſineſs. Neither will any ſuch be prevailed upon to quit the beaten path, from which no deviating ſteps of all that went before them can be found, till ſome ſatisfactory reaſon is aſſigned why their predeceſſors, who have diſcovered upon all other occaſions the moſt tender concern for the rights of the church, whoſe jealous eyes were ever on the watch to guard its property, have conducted themſelves in ſo ſtrange a manner, have acted ſo weak and inconſiſtent a part, as to ſtrain their attention to dues the moſt diminutive, to rake the very kennels of their rights in other inſtances, yet leave thoſe richer ſtreams of which we treat to flow for ages to another uſe. Till ſuch time

time as we receive ſatisfaction on this head, we are warranted, from the long and peaceable poſſeſſion of the laity—from the ſilent, uninterrupted approbation of thoſe whoſe duty it was to diſprove the right—from the known vigilance of the parties who were to benefit by this diſcovery—from that attention to their intereſt which never before was impeached, we are warranted, from theſe premiſes, and do well to conclude, that in the opinion of all thoſe of their own body, who have gone before them, the clergy have no title whatever to the tithes in queſtion.

I will now explain to you, by a very probable conjecture, the reaſon why the laity are not furniſhed with more direct evidence of their right in the caſe before us.

In early days, the great notoriety of the fact, and in all ſucceeding times the quiet poſſeſſion, might well be ſuppoſed to ſuperſede the neceſſity of preſerving other evidence of a right, than that which was thus written as it were in the memory, printed and engraved upon the very hearts of men. Neither could it enter into the honeſt imagination of human

beings, much leſs of Chriſtians, to conceive that at any period of time the profeſſors of ſanctity, would do a deed in the face of day, ſo profligate and ſhameleſs, as to give us reaſon to lament that proviſion was not made for ſuch a contingency.

If this will not ſuffice—If there are any who ſtill affect to ſet theſe conſiderations at nought, they will anſwer me no doubt in the words of the Jew.

> Till thou canſt rail the ſeal from off my bond,
> Thou but offend'ſt thy lungs to ſpeak ſo loud.

But loud as it may ſeem, if yet my voice, to ſerve my preſent purpoſe, is too low, I'll raiſe it, till it touch the ſenſe of thoſe that are the deafeſt;—ſuch I mean as will not hear.

I have ſaid all along, that the claims which I would reprobate are ſuch only as are novel in reſpect of the place. And I have endeavoured to prove, that the laity, who have evermore been in poſſeſſion of theſe immunities, are the rightful owners. If I have failed in this attempt, what cauſe of triumph has the church. Their title turns upon the ſelf ſame hinge; and if with long poſſeſſion to ſuſtain ſo large

large a portion of the weight, it is not equal to uphold the laymans plea, it never can ſupport their greater load—except a miracle be wrought to favour ſuch pretenſions.

The caſe is briefly this:—The clergy ſay theſe tithes by common-right are theirs, and as no time can rob them of their right, they do aſſert it now, and we muſt yield poſſeſſion. But what is this ſame common-right? 'Tis neither more nor leſs than immemorial cuſtom. And does this cuſtom, or this common-right peculiar to the church, does it take upon itſelf to extinguiſh all other right of the ſame kind; —that right, for inſtance, which is equally diffuſed over the face of this country in common to us all? If ſo, 'tis common-wrong, and properly withſtood. If otherwiſe, why then, I ſay, by ſuch poſſeſſion as no time can trace the origin; by cuſtom, therefore, properly defined, and thus, of courſe, by common-right, theſe tithes are ours. This is the laymans plea, which churchmen would overthrow, by ſetting up their own, though nine points out of ten the weaker of the two, as wanting the poſſeſſion.

How-

However, to indulge my reverend friends in this their ſtrong propenſity—to gratify their humour, let us ſay, by way of argument, that laymen have enjoyed theſe tithes by uſurpation, and that time, nor cuſtom, nor conſent of ages can correct and ſanctify this wrong. Admitting this in all its force, it betters not a jot their vain pretenſions. For this if any thing is clear, e'en as the ſun's meridian and unclouded ray, that had the right been theirs, it never had been brought to ſuch a paſs, it never had been made a doubtful queſtion by their long forbearance. This frank conceſſion will not, therefore, go in aid of their deſign, but this much better purpoſe it will ſerve, 'twill bring to light this hidden truth, which only can explain if laymen have indeed uſurped anothers property, the ſilent myſtery of the church's acquieſcence. Which truth is this. That heretofore it was a well known fact, that every ſpecies of tithe which comes within the compaſs of this deſcription; that is to ſay, every ſpecies of tithe which is novel in reſpect of the place, appertained to the crown, and not to the church; did cleave to the firſt,

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and not to the laſt—an inborn, genuine, clear, unſevered right, an undemanded, but indiſputable claim. In which predicament, if not within the laymens pale, theſe tithes did ſtand, till virtually transferred by the late *Nullum Tempus bill.* From which epoch, they became annexed, rivetted, and finally ſecured to the ſeveral proprietors of the land.

When it is viewed in this light, reſiſtance on our part will no longer appear to be the mere ſimple conſideration of ſelf defence; we ſhall find ourſelves called upon by other duties, by gratitude to him that gave, as well as by love to the conſtitution, to repel an attack, to ward a blow, where the crown itſelf is in the line of direction. Not wittingly perhaps, I will not yet ſay wittingly in that direction; but all men will ſay ſo, and will be juſtified in what they ſay, after this explanation, and the caution it conveys, if they do not inſtantly relinquiſh the purſuit; if they do not from that which is now imparted, abjure *their lawleſs—their diſloyal claim.* For then it will appear, by manifeſt proceeding, that they have contrived againſt the very life of the ſtate.

Should

Should it prove thus, ſhould they ſtill, in apt reſemblance to the moth, the ſilly ſightleſs moth, ſpite of the friendly warning hand, perſiſt in their deſign,—ſhould they ſtill go on and needs will ruſh into the flame that muſt conſume them, there is no other way of accounting for their conduct, there is no better apology to be made, than that which is couch'd in the words of the motto to this publication. To which, as it will then be truly and awfully pictureſque of their loſt condition, I beg leave to refer you.

APPENDIX.

TO thoſe gentlemen who have done ſo much honour to me by their approbation of this propoſal, and ſo much credit to themſelves by their unwearied efforts to ſet on foot this deſirable buſineſs, to thoſe gentlemen, in my preſent inviſible ſtate, I am not in a capacity to return thanks in the way I could wiſh—by perſonal acknowledgment. But I will do all

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in my power to prove my gratitude; I will endeavour to make known and perpetuate the diſintereſted purity of their well directed zeal, by giving the narrative of their proceedings, which appeared in the form of two letters, addreſſed to the Editor of the Newcaſtle Courant, in the County of Northumberland, a more general circulation than it could poſſibly experience in a provincial paper. And as the vein of reaſoning which runs thro' the whole of that performance is an exact tranſcript of my own ſentiments, exhibiting, in glowing colours, a picture which is for ever preſent to my mind, when I muſe upon the ſubject, I think myſelf particularly happy in an opportunity, while it is yet in the preſs, of enriching this edition with an Appendix ſo much to my purpoſe.

And who can tell, as a worthy friend of mine, to cheer me with a ray of hope, expreſſed himſelf,—And who can tell what important conſequences, and beneficial effects, may yet reſult from theſe beginnings? Providence often exalts itſelf by producing the moſt ſalutary benefits out of the moſt unpromiſing

means. *A little fire kindled in Northumberland may extend its light and heat to the whole kingdom, ſo as to preſerve from utter deſtruction this ſeemingly devoted country.*

The Narrative addreſſed to the Editor of the NEWCASTLE COURANT is as follows.

SIR, *October*, 15, 1783.

AS the queſtion which was brought forward in the grand jury room at the laſt aſſizes, reſpecting the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tythes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue, has awakened very general attention; and as the public, who are ſo deeply intereſted in the ſucceſs of this meaſure, are well entitled to every information relative thereto, the following authentic narrative of the proceedings is laid, by means of your

your uſeful paper, with all ſubmiſſion, before them.

As ſoon as the cuſtomary buſineſs was finiſhed, and the foreman * of the grand jury had given notice, that there was other matter of a public nature to come before them, the gentleman, who principally beſtirred himſelf in that concern, aroſe and addreſſed the company in the following words.

GENTLEMEN,

Having now gone through the whole of the buſineſs for which we were ſummoned upon this occaſion; before we diſperſe, I beg leave to call your attention to the conſideration of two points—*The preſent moſt alarming ſtate of the public debt—and the no leſs alarming claims which are daily ſet up againſt us by the church.* Both of theſe, from ſmall beginnings, in a very ſhort ſpace of time have grown up into grievances, which, if not ſpeedily and effectually removed, can hardly fail of drawing down up-

* Sir William Middleton, Baronet.

on our own heads, and will certainly heap upon thoſe of our children, every poſſible diſaſter which can befal us, as a people. The application, I ſay, muſt be ſpeedy and effectual; for ſo critical is our ſituation, and the growth of the evils of which I complain ſo rapid and luxuriant, that if they are permitted to take deeper root, and extend themſelves further, our caſe will ſoon become deſperate, without hope of other remedy, than that which it will have in common with all mortal diſeaſes, to work its own cure by the diſſolution of the body. For as we muſt ſuffer a dimunition of ſtrength, in proportion to the increaſe of theſe evils; and as the means which we now poſſeſs, are but barely ſufficient to enable us to diſcharge the outſtanding demands, and to reſerve for ourſelves any thing like a comfortable remainder, (to which ſurely in all reaſon and juſtice we are entitled) if any addition is made thereto, what muſt be the conſequence? Finding ourſelves unequal to the diſcharge of them, without reducing ourſelves to beggary, we ſhall of courſe reſiſt the payment; Government on the other hand will attempt to enforce

force it: a ſtruggle will enſue; in which both ſides, as is uſual in ſuch caſes, loſing ſight of juſtice, will aim only at the depreſſion of the other. In this manner we ſhall proceed from bad to worſe, till all reſpect of perſons, till every diſtinction betwixt man and man, till all ſubordination to law, till liberty itſelf is ſwallowed up in the all-devouring vortex of civil diſſention. This, Gentlemen, with too much probability on its ſide, may be ſaid to be an abſtract of the hiſtory of the times which are approaching. You will all agree with me, that it is a conſummation moſt devoutly to be avoided. But how, and in what manner to avoid it, that is the queſtion. While it remained a queſtion, Gentlemen, I was ſilent upon this ſubject; at leaſt in this pulic manner I was ſilent: though many a time and oft, in private converſation, and in ſecret, have I bewailed our impending calamities, the ingredients of that bitter cup, which as we journeyed, was preparing for us, as I thought, by the hand of fate. I am now, however, of a very different opinion. The film which had obſtructed my ſight is removed from before

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my eyes, and I can ſee clearly and diſtinctly that the dreadful potation, ſo far from being ours by unavoidable neceſſity, is only ſo by choice—that it is in ou power to reject it—to put it away from our lips to a diſtance for ever; only by deviating into another path, which will lead us to the temple of our political ſalvation: a path, which however rough and rugged it may ſeem, compared with thoſe ways which we muſt otherwiſe encounter, is as the ſmooth ſurface of a lake unruffled with winds, to the mountainous waters of the ocean, in its height of ill humour. I have ſaid thus much, Gentlemen, to convince you of the reality of the declining ſtate of our public health, and of the abſolute neceſſity of having recourſe, without loſs of time, to thoſe medicines, if any ſuch there are, which may reſtore our vigor. I proceed now, with infinite ſatisfaction, to inform you, that a ſpecific has been diſcovered, by means of which we may attain to the ſummit of our wiſhes. This book, Gentlemen, which I hold in my hand, in this little book is contained a receipt inſtructing us in what manner to prepare a bal-

ſam,

ſam, which being poured into our wounds, deep and dangerous as they ſeem, will heal them in an inſtant. Nothing is wanting but ſufficient reſolution on our part to apply it; of which I can have no doubt, when you are convinced of its efficacy: and I have either loſt my judgment, or I am blinded by my partiality, if that conviction does not follow, as a matter of courſe, the attentive peruſal of theſe ſheets. When I ſpeak of an attentive reading, I do not mean to inſinuate, that there is any thing difficult or abſtruſe herein to be met with; on the contrary, it is all plain and perſpicuous, inſomuch, that thoſe who run may read and underſtand. Yet ſome little time will be neceſſary for that purpoſe; I ſhall therefore propoſe, if agreeable, an adjournment of this meeting till to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, or any other hour which may ſuit the convenience of the company. Gentlemen will then come prepared to give an opinion, and if it ſhall appear that you concur with me in approving of the plan, which otherwiſe I muſt think I have taken upon myſelf raſhly to recommend, I will inform you what ſteps I have already

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taken to introduce it to the notice of that perſon, who ſits at the helm of the veſſel in which ourſelves, our families, and all our fortunes are embarked. I have now only further to obſerve, that having determined to bring this matter publicly before you, and being aware that many gentlemen might be here preſent, who had neither ſeen or heard of the propoſal alluded to, I took the precaution of deſiring Mr. Fiſher, the Librarian, to be provided with copies of the pamphlet, ſufficient to anſwer any probable demand which might be made upon him; and in order to ſave time and trouble, I deſired that he might attend this morning for the purpoſe of diſtributing them.

And now, Gentlemen, agreeable to the intimation I have given, I beg leave humbly to move, That this meeting be adjourned till tomorrow morning at nine o'clock, then to aſſemble, at this place, for the purpoſe of taking into conſideration the contents of a pamphlet, entitled, "A Propoſal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tythes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue;"

venue;" and to determine how far, and in what manner, it may become us to interfere, in recommending the ſame to the notice of the Ruling Powers.

The motion being handed to the foreman, he read it to the jury, when it was immediately ſeconded, and after ſome deſultory converſation, was agreed to without oppoſition. —However, at the requeſt of ſome of the jury, who declared it inconvenient to give their attendance the next day, the foreman applied to the judge, and the jury were diſcharged.

At the hour appointed, the company aſſembled the next morning, and the late foreman, being requeſted to take the chair, opened the buſineſs by reading the motion of the preceding day; when the gentleman, who had before addreſſed the jury, aroſe and ſpoke as follows:

GENTLEMEN,

It would very ill become me, who was indulged with ſo patient a hearing yeſterday, to intrude further upon the time and attention

of this company, if it was not neceſſary, in confirmation of that which I threw out yeſterday, by inſinuation, to give you poſitive aſſurance, that the propoſal before us is, at preſent, in contemplation of the miniſter. I ſpeak this, Gentlemen, from the evidence of letters which have paſſed between the Duke of Portland and myſelf, relative to this ſubject. The letters themſelves are of conſiderable length, I ſhall not therefore obtrude them upon you: it is ſufficient for our purpoſe to put you in poſſeſſion of the fact—"That I have already ſecured the attention, and I hope the patronage of the miniſter, to any thing of this kind which you may be pleaſed to recommend." I muſt not, however, omit to caution you, to conſider that which I have ſaid reſpecting the patronage of the miniſter, as proceeding from zeal, rather than knowledge; having indeed received, as yet, no aſſurance of that kind.

And now, Gentlemen, the ground being cleared before us, we enter fitly upon deliberation; and may proceed in it, till we are agreed upon that mode of conducting the buſineſs, which ſhall ſeem moſt likely to keep pace

pace with the impatience of our own deſires; to relieve ourſelves, and ſerve our country, by carrying this deſign into immediate execution. What I mean by immediate execution is, that the object ſhould be purſued unremittingly, and with as much diſpatch as is conſiſtent with the dignity and importance of the ſubject in hand. It muſt, no doubt, be referred ultimately to parliament; and, perhaps, it would be as well to make our advances at once, by a petition to that body, rather than enter into previous aſſociations, a practice not univerſally approved, and therefore, in this caſe, to be avoided; for I could wiſh to have this buſineſs taken up on ground which is liable to no objection.——But having already exceeded the bounds I had preſcribed myſelf, I give way, moſt readily, to any other gentleman who may be diſpoſed to deliver his ſentiments upon this intereſting ſubject.

A profound ſilence enſued, which was ſucceeded at length by a converſation, in which by turns almoſt every gentleman preſent took a part. From which it appearing to be the general wiſh that we ſhould take longer time

to deliberate, it was moved, " That the further conſideration of this queſtion be poſtponed to the day next ſucceeding the quarterly ſeſſions firſt enſuing:" To which an amendment was propoſed, to adjourn *ſine die*, but this amendment being preſently withdrawn, the original motion was again put, ſeconded, and carried without further oppoſition.

On the 9th of October, agreeable to the purport of the motion at the former meeting, a very reſpectable company aſſembled in the Town-Hall, at Alnwick, though many gentlemen, who were expected to have favoured the meeting, did not appear: and even a great majority of the magiſtrates attendant upon the ſeſſions, for whoſe accommodation, at their own particular requeſt, a conſiderable delay was incurred, were yet obliged to abſent themſelves on account of buſineſs, which continued to lengthen out the ſeſſions beyond all expectation. Soon after two o'clock, Mr. Collingwood, of Unthank, being requeſted to take the chair, opened the buſineſs by a particular ſtatement of that queſtion which had ſtood over for deciſion, and having reſumed his ſeat, the gentle-

gentleman who had originally propoſed the diſcuſſion thereof, aroſe and addreſſed the company as follows:

GENTLEMEN,

The interval of time betwixt this and our former meeting, has taken off the force of that objection, which occaſioned a temporary ſuſpenſion of the judgment which now awaits the queſtion before us, and which muſt, in ſome meaſure, determine its fate. It cannot now be ſaid, as when we were laſt aſſembled upon this buſineſs, that we are taken by ſurpriſe; ſufficient time has been allowed for deliberation, and I make no doubt but every gentleman here preſent has turned it to advantage. And though my zeal, like unto the flame which is lighted up in youthful breaſts at beauty's eye, and which urges them on to the conſummation of their wiſhes with eagerneſs that cannot brook delay, although my forward zeal, I ſay, to ſerve my country, made me conſider this adjourment, when firſt propoſed, as a loſs to the public, and hurtful to their

their cauſe, a moment's reflection convinced me of the error of that opinion, and pointed out to me a variety of advantages, which, till then, had eſcaped my notice. It occurred to me in the firſt place, from what I had already experienced of the matter, that we had much more reaſon to expect to overcome prejudices, to clear away doubts, to ſurmount difficulties, and of courſe to weaken, if not annihilate oppoſition, and increaſe the number of our friends; it occurred to me that we had much more reaſon to expect a plentiful return of theſe, and ſuch like benefits, than the reverſe of any of them, from a longer and more familiar intercourſe, a cloſer and more ſcrupulous inveſtigation of the ſubject. I conſidered further, that by means of this delay, we ſhould be able to ſhelter ourſelves from that reproach, which has, upon all occaſions, been obſerved to follow cloſe upon the heels of haſty counſels. For ſuch is the nature and diſpoſition of man, without any previous examination of the merits, we annex indiſcriminately, to all indeliberate proceedings, an idea of raſhneſs, or ſomething worſe; not conſidering our own relative ſituation

ation at the time, not conſidering that the ſentence which we paſs is a condemnation of ourſelves, and that the blow, which we thus aim at another's head, recoils with double force againſt our own: But yet the fact is ſuch; from whence I conclude, that had you brought this matter to a more early deciſion, however obvious the truths you had advanced, however fair your intention, how wiſely ſoever you had determined the point, the world would have given you no credit in either caſe. Had the current of your opinions run counter to my wiſhes, it cannot be ſuppoſed you would have eſcaped from blame. If, on the other hand, by ſtrong conviction urged, and by the beſt of all all poſſible motives, the ſober, chaſte and genuine love of your country; if borne along by theſe, you had ſwelled, with your approbation, the full tide of my hopes, ſtill there would not have been wanting thoſe who would have accuſed you of acting under the influence of that very ſpirit, which forms a principal part of our plan to keep down and extinguiſh. And thus, Gentlemen, from the mere circumſtance of our own well meant but miſguided zeal,

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we ſhould in all probability have defeated the beſt purpoſe of our heart; and loſt a queſtion of ſuch fair expectation, in which, as in a mirror, we may view reflected a ſcene of inexpreſſible happineſs, prepared not only for ourſelves and our immediate ſucceſſors, but extended in proſpect, with increaſing beauty, to all ſucceeding generations. But if, in the firſt aukward moments of formal introduction, while you were yet ſtrangers to one another, and with an eye of prejudice obliquely viewed your new acquaintance; if, in that early ſtage of the buſineſs, you had ſtood condemned in the opinion of the world, by putting a negative upon this queſtion; what I pray you will be ſaid of us now, if we ſhould ſet our faces gainſt this reform? What will be ſaid of us now, when with greater ſhew of juſtice, and with more deſerving, we have laid ourſelves open to the cenſure of mankind? When our preſent tranſgreſſion, compared with the former offence, is in that proportion which wilful and premeditated murder bears to the caſuality of death by thoughtleſſneſs occaſioned, or ſome ſudden ſtart of paſſion? Will it not be ſaid, that

we

we are determined enemies to the welfare and proſperity of this realm? Shall we not be reprobated as men who are leagued, or at leaſt who court an alliance with thoſe who drink their neighbours blood, who fatten upon the ſpoils of their country, and enrich themſelves with the wreck of this ſinking ſtate?

If there yet remains, in the breaſt of any man, a doubt reſpecting the expediency of this meaſure, in recommendation of which I have exerted myſelf, upon this and former occaſions, to the height of my poor abilities; if any doubt remains, taking it for granted that truth is our only aim, and that we are all equally intent upon the diſcovery, I beg leave to obſerve, that it is more particularly incumbent on thoſe who doubt, if they would act a conſiſtent part, to beſtir themſelves in promoting an enquiry, which alone can open their eyes to conviction, and without which they muſt for ever remain in the ſame ſtate of perplexing uncertainty, which, of all other poſſible ſtates, is that which is moſt painful to an ingenuous mind. Beſides, Gentlemen, it ſhould be conſidered, that we are not aſſembled upon

this occaſion to determine finally, whether the propoſal before us ſhall or ſhall not be moulded into the conſtitution of this country, whether it ſhall or ſhall not be paſſed into a law; we are met here only, as it were, a grand jury upon the queſtion, in whoſe province it is to decide from the evidence of worth before us, how far we are juſtified in recommending it to the notice of parliament. When it comes there, it will be analiſed and ſifted to the bottom: and if, in conſequence of that fiery trial, a diſcovery is made, that we have been deceived by appearances—that it contains nothing of intrinſic value—that it is a mere compoſition of baſe unprofitable metals—no blame will reſt with us, nor will injury accrue to the public or to any individual. If, on the other hand, it ſhall come forth from the mouth of the furnace, pure, unimpaired, and refulgent; what joy will be our portion, when we look forward to the comforts that are in ſtore! And when there is ſo promiſing an appearance of ſucceſs, with advantages, attendant thereon, ſo rare and excellent, nor any riſk of blame, or detriment in caſe of failure, can any gentleman

tleman hesitate respecting the part which he should take this day! You cannot sure demur, if love of honest fame has life within you, when you consider the praises that will be due, the thanks that will be given to those men, who, not despairing of the commonwealth, did bravely face this formidable Hydra, this all-devouring monster, which hath already swallowed up so considerable a part of your property, nor yet is satisfied, but stands prepared with multifarious jaws, extended wide, to gorge that portion which remains. You cannot sure demur, if it were only to gratify your feelings, when you take into the scale of inducements that fountain of exquisite pleasure, which must for ever spring up in the minds of those men, who having had the firmness to bid defiance to this threatening danger, and the virtue to persevere, had likewise the good fortune to return triumphant from the charge, amidst joyful acclamations, seated gloriously in the hearts of their grateful country.

I beg leave, therefore, humbly to move, That leave be given to read a petition to parliament, praying them to take under consi-

deration the contents of a pamphlet, entitled, "A Propoſal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tythes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue."

This motion being read from the chair, ſeconded and paſſed without a diſſentient voice, the petition alluded to was read to the company, and the buſineſs of the day concluded with the following motion:

That this petition be referred to a county meeting, and that the high ſheriff be requeſted to call a meeting for that purpoſe.

Which motion, being likewiſe handed to the chairman, was put, ſeconded, and carried, without oppoſition.

The following is a Copy of the Petition.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament aſſembled.

The humble Petition of the Perſons whoſe names are hereunto ſubſcribed.

SHEWETH,

That your petitioners have ſeen, and read, and duly conſidered the contents of a pamphlet,

phlet, entitled, " A Propoſal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tythes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue."

That your Petitioners, feeling for the preſent diſtreſſes of the State, and dreading the certain effects of the further growth of thoſe evils, the removal of which is the ſubject of that performance, are of opinion, that a deſign, which has for its aim the political ſalvation of this country, the happineſs of the community at large, and of every individual, and which propoſes to work its effect by means which are, apparently, both ſafe and honourable, is entitled to the attention of parliament: Your Petitioners, therefore, beg leave to recommend the propoſal in queſtion to the notice of this Honourable Houſe, praying Them to deliberate thereon, and, if in Their wiſdom it ſhall ſeem meet, that They would be pleaſed to take the neceſſary ſteps to give it the form and force of law.

And your Petitioners ſhall ever pray, &c.

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The buſineſs having proceeded thus far, and the public at large being now put in full poſſeſſion of every particular, want of information is certainly no longer an admiſſible plea. And as it cannot be ſuppoſed that want of attention to a ſubject, which is allowed on all hands to be highly intereſting to individuals, and of great national importance, can be pleaded, in excuſe, by any man who wiſhes well to his country; it is preſumed, that the next meeting, of which timely notice will be given in this, and the other Newcaſtle papers, will be both numerous and reſpectable, in ſupport of the meaſure.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

(Signed) FRANCIS BLAKE.

To the *Printer* of the *Newcaſtle Courant.*

SIR,

I BEG the favour of you to lay before the public the concluſion of the buſineſs relative to the ſubject of my former letter, as follows:

Agreeable

Agreeable to the intimation of the printed advertiſements in the Newcaſtle papers, the gentlemen aſſembled in the Town-Hall of Morpeth, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the 26th inſtant, when Mr. Collingwood, of Unthank, being requeſted to take the chair, opened the buſineſs, by ſtating the particular queſtion before them; and having reſumed his ſeat, the gentleman who had requeſted the honour of their attendance addreſſed the company in the following words:

GENTLEMEN,

I think it incumbent upon me to ſay ſomething in explanation of my own conduct in this buſineſs. I beg leave, however, previouſly to lay before you the contents of a paper, written in anſwer to ſeveral objections, and tranſmitted for the benefit of the objecting parties, to a worthy friend and correſpondent of mine, who had done me the honour to name the difficulties to me. Of which paper, I think it neceſſary to make this public exhibition, leſt other gentlemen, who are not in the circle of that communication, entertaining the ſame objec-

objections, and not having the like opportunity of receiving ſatisfaction, may be induced to withdraw their countenance from a deſign, which otherwiſe they might think entitled to their beſt ſupport. This paper differs ſomewhat from the original in point of form—the objections are made general, as coming from the public—and the anſwers, which are ſeverally annexed, are more diſtinct and full.

The ſeveral objections, with the anſwers, are as follow:

OBJECTIONS.

1ſt. We are not competent to decide upon this meaſure, and therefore we cannot, with any degree of propriety, take part either in favour of the queſtion, or againſt it.

Anſwer. Such gentlemen as excuſe themſelves on this pretence, have entirely miſtaken the point. *It is not required of them to decide upon the meaſure,* but merely to refer it to the deciſion of others, who are certainly competent. Beſides, there is an old obſervation, which ſays, He that is not for me is againſt me;

me; but of this it is needleſs to take advantage, for, ſtrictly ſpeaking, the propoſition itſelf being founded in error, there is not, in fact, any objection before us.

2d. We do not approve of a petition to parliament.

Anſ. Such as do not approve of a petition to parliament, diſapprove of that which is clearly the moſt conſtitutional mode of proceeding; and which, indeed, in the preſent caſe, is the only proper one, being an application, in the firſt inſtance, to that body which is not only veſted with a power that is ſuited to the purpoſe, but with an excluſive privilege to give birth to all bills which have any relation to money.

3d. The author's calculation differs widely from all others that have hitherto appeared in print, which is enough to deter us from meddling in the buſineſs.

Anſ. This objection expreſſes a doubt upon a point very material to be rightly underſtood, and therefore operates in full recommendation of the enquiry propoſed. Agreeable to former calculations, we are at this moment an un-

done people, the one half of our property is already ſwallowed up. Can any man of feeling reſt in his bed with ſuch a viſion, though but in idea, before his eyes! If no other uſe was to be made of it, in conſideration of our own eaſe and happineſs, it is incumbent upon us to inveſtigate this point with nice preciſion. Let the diſcovery be what it may, there is nothing that can poſſibly befal us half ſo dreadful, as the ſtate in which this cruel objection has placed us.

4th. We do not think it reaſonable to compel every perſon of the ſame neat income, but differently circumſtanced in reſpect of the number of children, to contribute the ſame ſum to the ſervice of the ſtate.

Anſ. This objection not only cuts up by the roots the preſent plan, but all other payments that have yet been impoſed, and with them every idea which has hitherto been entertained of impartial diſtributive juſtice. What is ſaid reſpecting the diſproportion of numbers in different families, applies only to particular caſes—to thoſe perſons who are bleſt with a numerous offspring, ill exchanged, indeed, for

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the better ability to bear the burdens of the ſtate. And even this fearful diſparity, which is the baſis of the argument, diſappears upon a general comprehenſive view, by which we find that all families in the long run, taking one generation with another, are nearly upon a level in reſpect of numbers.

5th. We object to that power with which, in order to aſcertain the *quantum* of taxable property, an officer of the crown muſt be armed to examine every incumbrance that affects an eſtate—A power which is ſtill more intolerable than that which is at preſent entruſted to an officer of exciſe.

Anſ. This, indeed, would be a very ſerious objection, but happily, it has not even the ſhadow of exiſtence. On the contrary, the landed proprietor being required to make good the full payment in proportion to his income, will himſelf be armed in return with a power to deduct that proportion, which is due from others who hold ſecurities under him. All incumbrances, therefore, which affect an eſtate, will remain exactly upon the ſame footing of ſecreſy as at preſent. However, to give per-

fect ſatisfaction upon this head, I beg leave to obſerve, that it is not intended to make theſe payments to government at all, but to individuals properly authoriſed to receive ſuch payments for their own uſe. Government will have no concern whatever in the buſineſs, otherwiſe than as a truſtee, to enforce payment, if attempted to be withheld, whoſe interference, as ſalutary to individuals, is allowed in this caſe, but in no other.

6th, The uncertain produce upon this experiment, together with the novelty of the matter, inclines us to give the preference to the old ſyſtem.

Anſ. Provided the Author's calculation of the value of real property is a juſt one, which I do not take altogether upon truſt, when I proclaim it a truth, nothing can be more certain than the produce upon this experiment. Reſpecting the mere novelty of the matter, that objection can have no weight, when we conſider, that to all appearance the deſign is both ſafe and honourable, as well as efficient.

7th. We object on account of the precarious ſtate of that revenue by which we are to provide

provide for the defence of the kingdom, and uphold the credit of the nation.

Anſ. It reſts upon the great baſis of commerce, the ſupport of us all, the means by which we have riſen, and when it fails, we fall together.

Having now gone through the whole of the objections, and furniſhed ſuch anſwers as, I truſt, will prove ſatisfactory, I conſider this as the laſt neceſſary effort of my exertions. You are now finally to determine whether I have hitherto been engaged in a fruitleſs enterpriſe, and in vain endeavours to do you ſervice. That I have laboured in your vineyard is well known to you all; but with what ſucceſs, and whether I have been uſefully employed, remains with you to declare. The hour of retribution is at hand. Not that I aſk, or expect, or indeed, were the ſame in my offer, would accept, other reward than that which I hope to take in common with yourſelves, under favour of the preſent deſign. At a moment like this, the moſt awful of my life, when with the fears of a culprit, though not with his guilt, I ſtand trembling before you, nothing could ſupport

port me under the preſſure of that anxiety which I feel for the impending fate of this queſtion, and the burden of ſuch heavy accuſations againſt me, but a conſciouſneſs of fair intention, of ſincere and diſintereſted zeal in the ſervice of the public.—Accuſations not indeed openly and manfully brought forward, but left with timid caution to the conſtruction of others, as neceſſary deductions from diſcourſe ſeemingly caſual, but framed in reality, with infinite art and addreſs, for that particular purpoſe. It is a vulgar phraſe, and I will not ſpeak ſo diſreſpectfully as to apply it to any man, but of theſe allegations I muſt needs take the liberty of ſaying, Give them but rope, they will hang themſelves. I am aware, Gentlemen, of the ſeverity of this ſentence; but when I have ſtated to you the particulars of the caſe, if you think I have judged amiſs, I ſtand here for correction

To inſinuate, as ſome have done, that I have proceeded thus far, without hope of ſucceſs, is, in my humble opinion, to pronounce me ſenſeleſs or inſane; and that I think is not your meaning. To alledge that I have no wiſh to ſucceed, is to ſay that I am void

void of ſincerity, and that, I truſt, you will not ſay. To aſſert that I have put myſelf forward upon this occaſion, in fond expectation of making a favourable diſplay of ſuch ſlender talents as have fallen to my lot, what is this but to ſay, that I am the weakeſt and moſt vain of mankind: and at a time of life, when the judgment of other men is only ripened to perfection, that mine has gone back, or run wholly to decay. For, ſurely, in the wide range of nature, there cannot be produced an inſtance of greater folly and preſumption, than for me to imagine, that a ſubject, which is of itſelf an intellectual feaſt, full of flavour and poignancy, could ſtand in need of the inſipid ſeaſoning of my harangues to make it reliſh upon your palates.

To ſay that I have taken advantage of the author's concealment, to ſhare with him in the praiſe of his performance, or what is ſtill worſe, to engroſs it wholly to my uſe, is to exhibit me in a point of view that is truly ridiculous. It implies that I have arrayed myſelf in borrowed plumes, in order, ſelf important thus to ſtrut and ſtare before you. But

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if I have done this, if I have ever attempted by word or deed, directly or indirectly to induce a belief that I myſelf was he, when I was no other than a counterfeit, let my accuſer ſtand forth, and I will give him ſuch proof of his error, or as the poet expreſſes it,

> Such damning proof, that henceforth he ſhall fear
> To tax my wrath, and own my conduct clear.

Do not miſtake me, Gentlemen, it is not my meaning to lay under reſtraint the conjectures of any man, it is not in my power, and as little is it my wiſh to do ſo; all of which I complain is, that I have been accuſed of giving encouragement to their particular direction. While the matter is in doubt, the ſpeculative mind, for its own entertainment, or that of others, may ſpin without offence his web or cobweb of ſurmiſe; which of the two it may prove I will not take upon me to determine; its real value can only then be known, when in the fulneſs of time the author ſhall think fit to reveal himſelf. Hitherto there has been no filiation, no one yet has either owned

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or diſavowed relationſhip, the child is therefore yours to day, 'tis his to-morrow, the next it may be mine, and thus by turns the credit which it gives is ſhared amongſt us. So let it be.—I can have no objection to this diſtribution, to more than this, ſo far as it concerns myſelf I do object.

It is the author's preſent wiſh to lie concealed—'tis ſo expreſſed. Does any one believe that this proceeds from whim? Can you imagine that he is either afraid, or that he need be aſhamed to make himſelf known? Then wherefore ſhould we grudge him this indulgence? There is but one good reaſon on which to found a wiſh that it was otherwiſe, which is, that the public in the mean time are deprived of the benefit of his ſervices. Yet poſſibly we err in this conjecture. Becauſe he is unknown, it does not follow, that he has hitherto been inactive, or that he is not at this time in ſome place, employed in forwarding the great work which he has ſet on foot, as effectually, and perhaps more ſo, than if he were here ſtanding in confeſſion before you. Far be it from me, then, to attempt to draw the veil a-

ſide; and further ſtill, to ſay or do ought which might create a ſuſpicion that I was aſſuming to myſelf what belonged to another. Let who will, therefore, have the merit of preparing the diſh, be it remembered, that I have put in my claim to no other than that which appertains to the very humble occupation of bringing it to your table, and placing it before you. Except, indeed, that I have endeavoured, by every perſuaſion in my power, to prevail upon you to eat thereof; fully convinced that it is not only wholſome food, and conducive to health, but neceſſary to life; that without it you muſt die, not indeed the death of the righteous, but of the worſt of parricides, of men who wilfully embrue their hands in the blood of their country.

I will now ſpeak out, it is no time to be mealy-mouthed: Have you no feeling? Are you palſied? Are all your faculties benumbed? Have you not eyes or ears, have you not ſeen and heard, or does it remain with me to acquaint you, that a confederacy is formed, that the clergy are united to a man againſt us, that they have entered into a general

neral ſubſcription in ſupport of their cauſe, not the cauſe of religion, otherwiſe we ſhould gladly have borne a part; but to do that on which a curſe has been entailed from the beginning—*to move their neighbour's land-mark* —and ſhall we not confederate likewiſe, ſhall we not bodily oppoſe this irreligious deſign? Or will you wait ſingly, wrapped up in ſloth and ſtupid inſenſibility, till it comes to your particular turn to feel the painful effects of that cruel perſecution, which is raiſed by the church againſt us. If ſuch is your determination, you are indeed deſerving of the worſt that can befal you in that reſpect.

As to public matters—you ſee the preſent ſtate of the funds? *Bankruptcy and rebellion ſtare us full in the face!* and by what means is it propoſed to avert theſe dire calamities? By œconomy, and a ſinking fund. * Oeconomy! of whom? Of miniſters! And are you ſtill that eaſy, fond, believing people? Are

* See Mr. Fox's ſpeech on the addreſs, as printed in the London papers.—See alſo ſimilar declarations from the preſent Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Pitt.

you ſtill willing to truſt your ſalvation to the *Oeconomy* of miniſters, ſo often tried in vain? After the experience which you have had of ſo many years, of ſo many men, of ſo many broken promiſes, you cannot ſurely be ſuch egregious dupes, as not to perceive, that thoſe who have propoſed a ſinking fund for that purpoſe, had no other meaning but to throw dirt in your eyes, that you might not purſue and overtake them in their tract of iniquity. It is, indeed, moſt truly called a ſinking fund; it is a fund that would ſink this, or any nation; it is the fund of corruption. By doing that which I have recommended, you will relieve miniſters from the trouble of looking out for reſources; and if they are wiſe, and are upright, they will adopt the meaſure for their own eaſe, as well as the public good.

You will likewiſe emancipate yourſelves from the influence of that power which they muſt ever retain over the reſolutions of men, to wind them to their purpoſe, while they continue to have the fingering of the public money. It is a power not fit to be truſted in the hands of any man, or ſet of men. All that

have

have yet been concerned have invariably abuſed it, and as all have, all will continue to do ſo. Till this is done away, there is no redemption for us; and when 'tis done away, you have cut up corruption by the root, that baleful plant, which ſickens all our virtue. Miniſters will not open their private purſe in ſupport of venal adherents, and there is none elſe that will be left in their reach. I do believe the preſent miniſter * is an honeſt man, and as ſuch I contemplate his ſituation with pleaſure, and look up to him with a joyful hope of ſupport. But whether I am founded in this opinion or not, it is our duty to unite, and enforce performance. The love of our country, and the great law of nature, the law of ſelf-preſervation, demands it of us. I have ſaid it before, and I repeat it again, there is no other alternative. You muſt either do this, or ſomething to this effect, or miſchief will enſue, ſuch as the ſun's all-piercing eye hath not yet looked upon in this iſland. To prevent which, by rouſing you from the ſlumbers of ſelf ſecu-

* The Duke of Portland.

rity,

rity, by pointing to your danger, and to the means of eſcape, and not, as ſome would have you believe, to pull the nodding ruin on your heads, have I left the ſhades of retirement; quitting that, which to me is a paradiſe, that to which I ſhall return, having effected my purpoſe, not only without regret, but with rapture, like unto that which is felt, after painful ſeparation, by hearts well tuned to one another.

What I am now ſaying reminds me of another circumſtance more material to be diſcuſſed, and fully explained, than any which I have hitherto touched upon, as in all probability the fate of the day will hinge thereon. —It is laid to my charge that I cheriſh and give entertainment to ambitious thoughts. To which I anſwer—I am not indeed without ambition, but it is not of that caſt of which I am accuſed. But what if it were? while it is kept within due bounds, while the object is neither unlawful, nor unbecoming my ſtation, by what logic can it conſtitute a crime? If mere ambition is a ſin, which of you will throw the firſt ſtone? A ſeat in parliament is ſaid to be

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my aim: admitting that it is, does any one object? Have I not pretenſions? However deficient in ability, you perceive that I have the will to ſerve the public; and the ſituation in which I ſtand, in point of fortune, thanks to the prudent care of my parents, has placed me far above any temptation to do the thing which is wrong. And are not theſe the neceſſary ingredients of which the repreſentatives of the people ſhould be compoſed? But it is whiſpered that I aſpire to the honour of obtaining this mark of diſtinction by means of your particular favour. Ay! there is the rub! I am not ſingular in this. There are others who entertain ambitious thoughts, which interfere and are incompatible with thoſe which are attributed to me. It is therefore neceſſary to depreciate me in the opinion of the world, to repreſent me ſelfiſh and deſigning—that I do not appear before you in my proper character—that I am not the diſintereſted perſon I would palm upon your credulity—that I am here in diſguiſe—that I have only taken up this queſtion as a fit ſubject for popular declamation, hoping thereby to wheedle myſelf into favour,

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and turn your attention aſide from others which are more deſerving—that the public advantage is a mere pretence;—in a word, that I have no other meaning but to ſerve myſelf. —What! That I have blaſphemed my country's ſacred name, by making uſe of it as a cat's paw—as a ſtalking-horſe—as a ſtep-ladder to preferment! Periſh the thought! And he that harboured it—may heaven forgive. And will you then—to give the argument its ſcope, and will you then betray your country's cauſe to keep a wretch like me, a worthleſs individual down? It cannot be:—or if it can, it muſt not be; a crime like this would blot the faireſt fame. The commiſſion of which having it in my power to prevent, there would indeed be good room for complaint were I not to interpoſe. Then hear me while I ſpeak—If there is honour, truth, or faith in man, believe me, Gentlemen, I have no private ends to anſwer —I have no aim but that which is the immediate object of the deſign before us—I have no views but ſuch as are obvious and apparent to you all. And however abſurd it may ſeem formally to reject that which has never yet been

been in my offer, the peculiar circumſtances of the caſe warrant the proceeding. I do therefore, here in your preſence, not only diſclaim every intention of the kind, but utterly renounce and abjure it. Neither do I pretend to make a merit of this: it is an eaſy ſacrifice when duty and inclination go hand in hand. For in truth, all that I feel of ambition, is to have it in my power to do ſomething in my journey through life, of eſſential ſervice to my country; and having done it, all that I would aſk or court in return, is to be permitted to take back with me to my retreat the comfort it would yield me. And now, Gentlemen, that I have diſburdened my mind and cleanſed myſelf thoroughly from all political ſins, whether real or imputed, and removed that obſtacle which alone could operate as a bar of ſeparation between us, I truſt there will not be found, upon the preſent queſtion, two minds in this company. In full confidence of which, of your hearty and unanimous ſupport, I ſhall venture without further heſitation to move,

That the petition which was produced at the meeting at Alnwick, and is now before

you, be approved and adopted by this reſpectable meeting

This motion being ſeconded by Mr. John Aſkew, the petition was read; and no one riſing in oppoſition, the opinion of the company was taken from the ſhew of hands, which in the firſt inſtance appeared to be doubtful, but upon a ſecond diviſion was clearly againſt the motion. And thus was this great queſtion loſt, for the preſent, by *a ſilent vote.*

I am, Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

TILMOUTH, *Nov.* 27, 1783.

(Signed) FRANCIS BLAKE.

AFTER ſo much previous ſucceſs, the failure in this laſt inſtance requires explanation. The fact I find is this:—Agreeable to the reſolution entered into at Alnwick, application was made to the late high-ſheriff, a gentleman of faireſt fame, of unimpeached integrity, who, ſtrange

ſtrange as it may ſeem in a perſon of that deſcription, and ſtranger ſtill in one that favoured the deſign, refuſed, upon ſome miſtaken opinion of informality, to call the county together. This unforeſeen, this inavertable event, diſconcerted the parties, deranged their plan, and ſeemed to threaten danger. It was therefore proceeded againſt as an evil, whereas in fact it was no otherwiſe an evil, than as it was made to produce one. The ſhip now fairly launched, and waiting for a wind, ſecurely might have rode a while at anchor. Inſtead of this, an expedient was thought of which brought about the wreck of the veſſel, even in the body of the harbour. A meeting was advertiſed in a private name, which was evidently a work of ſupererogation, the propoſal having already received the ſufficient approbation of private meetings. Gentlemen who were aware of this, abſented themſelves, avoiding the trouble of a fruitleſs jaunt.—— Others who were preſent took no part in the buſineſs. Of thoſe who voted, the whole together did not amount to two dozen; the number in oppoſition muſt clearly then, at any rate,

rate, have been too inconſiderable to prove deciſive. From which circumſtance, and from the known zeal of the ſupporters of this meaſure, I am confident there can be no ſuch idea entertained as that of acquieſcence under the preſent determination. I ſhall therefore look forward with eager expectation of further and better tidings from that quarter. Hoping, wiſhing, praying in the mean time, to hear at ſome not diſtant period, that *the love of preſent eaſe and emolument*, that gangrene of the heart, which alone can prevent the progreſs of this deſign, has abated its virulence, and left that noble part, from theſe impurities made clean, to act upon the will, for general good, as nature's God deſigned it.

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